CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES: ADJUSTMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

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Abstract

This study used a combined method of narrative analysis and thematic analysis to explore the adjustment process for Chinese immigrant women in remote settings. Participants who were originally from Mainland China, but came to Canada under sponsorship or with their husbands were interviewed. Six themes and 19 sub-themes emerged from the data, which show that Chinese immigrant women in remote settings experience social isolation, unemployment, severe weather, a different lifestyle, marriages behind screens, and challenges of parenting. Some challenges occur regardless of the settings (urban or rural), whereas others happen or are exacerbated in remote communities. In remote communities of northern B.C., unique conditions and severe weather can result in difficulties of adjustment. Nonetheless, the women may have more job opportunities in remote settings even if these are low paying, manual labour jobs. The findings also demonstrate that the women's social support networks are one of the most important factors in adjusting to the new country.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Canada has a large immigrant population: almost everyone in Canada is an immigrant, or can trace his or her roots to immigrants, with the exception of the Aboriginal population. In the 2006 Census, people reported more than 200 different ethnic origins. In 2009, international migration accounted for two-thirds of the population growth in Canada (Statistics Canada). Besides population growth, immigration also plays an important role in Canada's economy (Guruge & Collins, 2008).

The numbers of immigrant women and refugees in Canada have increased over the years and the percentage of women settling in Canada as immigrants usually exceeds that of men by two to seven percent. Although the difference seems small from year to year, these numbers become significant when assessed cumulatively. For instance, between 2005 and 2008, Canada received 32,886 more female immigrants than male (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008). Almost one in five females currently living in Canada was born outside the country. Overall, there were a total of 2.8 million foreign-born females living in Canada in 2001. Together, they made up 19% of the country's total female population in 2001(Statistics Canada, 2006a).

Between 1998 and 2007 over 199,400 female immigrants landed in B.C.. Asian countries are the major source of female immigrants to land in B.C. Among the top 10 source countries for female immigrants, seven of them are Asian. China, in particular, has been the largest source of immigrants to Canada for over a decade. The number of Chinese female immigrants to B.C. is 47.4% more than in 1998, accounting for 22.0% of the total female immigrants in B.C. (BC Stats, 2008).

Moreover, a large percentage of female immigrants have immigrated to Canada under sponsorship. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in 2003, 55-60% of male-initiated immigration applications involved sponsorship of wives after marriage in a foreign country, and in 2008, more than 30% of female permanent residents immigrated to Canada under the family class category, particularly as spouses and partners. These statistics show the increasing number of immigrant males who are choosing to marry women from their countries of origin, as well as the rising number of nonimmigrant males who are choosing to marry women from other countries and cultures (Raj & Silverman, 2002). In particular, women who find spouses through the mail or Internet are defined by Glodava and Onizuka as mail order brides (as cited in Constable, 2003). Although much research has explored this topic, there are no studies detailing the exact population of mail order brides in any given place.

In 2006, immigrants accounted for 5.3% of the population living in Canada's rural and small town areas. Statistics Canada (2006b) showed that 12.2% of the total immigrant population settled in remote areas of British Columbia (B.C.). Compared to other provinces, the largest share of the immigrant population in rural and small town areas was in B.C. It is thus important to consider immigrant issues as a social worker situated in northern B.C..

This study examines immigrant women's adjustment in remote communities of northern British Columbia and its relationship with social support networks. The research focused on Chinese immigrant women who are originally from Mainland China. It was conducted in northern British Columbia. The primary question was, "what is the adjustment process for Chinese immigrant women in remote communities of northern British Columbia". In order to provide a solid base from which to ask this question, a sub-question was

investigated: "How do Chinese immigrant women use their own social support networks to cope with these issues".

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Definitions of Terms

Immigrant women. In this study, the term "immigrant women" refers to women who were not born in Canada, but have been sponsored by their partners or husbands who are Canadian Citizens or permanent residents under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The immigrant population can be categorized into the three main groups: family class, economic immigrants, and refugees (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008). In the family class, permanent residents are sponsored by a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident living in Canada who is 18 years of age or older. The Family Immigration Category allows citizens and permanent residents to sponsor relatives from abroad to join them (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). In particular, family immigrants can be divided into two groups: those forming new families through transnational marriages, such as mail order brides, and those reuniting with family members from whom they were separated through the migration process (Cote, Kerisit, & Cote, 2001). Thus, "immigrant women" refers to women coming to Canada through marriage.

Chinese immigrant women. In this study, the term Chinese immigrant women refers to women who were born in Mainland China, but have been sponsored by their partners or husbands who are Canadian Citizens or permanent residents under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or came to Canada with their husbands.

Adjustment. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2010), "adjustment" is the process of adapting or becoming used to a new situation. In this sense, when discussing adjustment, it means the process that one uses to adapt or become accustomed to the situation in the new country.

Issues. The term "issue" often refers to "a subject or problem about which people are thinking and talking" (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2010). In this thesis, immigrant women's issues in remote communities of northern B.C. refer to the difficulties or problems that immigrant women face in remote settings, especially in the initiation of coming to Canada.

Remote communities in northern British Columbia. When it comes to the terms "remote communities" and "northern B.C.", people have various explanations and perceptions. As Graham (1990) explains, "people tend to define the north for themselves based on particular mental constructs that often bear little relation to reality" (p 21). There are no definitions of these terms that are accepted by all Canadians, or even by all those providing social work services, so I will clarify "remote communities" and "northern B.C." for the purpose of this study.

The definition of "north" can be approached through two methods: single-factor definitions and multiple-factor definitions (Graham, 1990). In the former, the north can be identified by a single factor, such as geographic location, the characteristics of the nature, biology, or climate. Conversely, some geographers (e.g., Hamelin, 1978) assert that northern territories, like northern Canada, cannot be identified based on a single criterion, but that there is a continuum based on a number of natural and human factors. A variety of features and characteristics, such as latitude, summer heat, annual cold, types of ice, total precipitation, natural vegetation cover, accessibility by means other than air, air service, population, and degree of economic activity, are used to define the concept of north by these geographers.

On the other hand, "remote communities" refers to rural and small towns. According to the Cambridge Dictionary of American English, remote means "far away in distance". As well, rural areas and small towns are defined residually as geographical units which are not in a Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) (Statistics Canada, 2010). A CMA consists of an urbanised core having a population of at least 100,000 people. Therefore, rural Canada includes places where the population is less than 100,000 people; that are far away from large urban centres; and located in remote and northern regions of the country (Burns, 2007).

For this study, "northern B.C." is defined by the simple concept of geography. According to Northern Health (2008), northern B.C. covers almost two-thirds of British Columbia's landscape, bordered by the Northwest and Yukon Territories to the north, the B.C. interior to the south, Alberta to the east, and Alaska and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The study defines rural and small towns in these areas as remote communities of northern B.C.. In particular, the research was conducted in remote communities.

Fort St. John. A good example is Fort St. John, a city in British Columbia's northeast region. A member municipality of the Peace River Regional District, the city covers an area of about 22.74 square kilometers with 17,402 residents (Statistics Canada, 2006c). Travelling by highway, the city is 467 km north of Prince George via Hudson's Hope, and 408 km south of Fort Nelson.

Fort St. John calls itself "the energetic city", which reflects the large resource base of oil, natural gas, forestry, and agriculture (City of Fort St. John, 2009). The population has grown rapidly in recent years. According to the 2006 census (Statistics Canada, 2006c), between 2001 and 2006, the population of the city increased 8.5 percent, which is even higher than the population change of British Columbia, which is 5.3 percent. The distribution

of total population and immigrant population and the changes from 1986 to 2006 is outlined in the following table.

Table 1

Distribution of total population and immigrant population in Fort St. John

Year	Total Population	Immigrants	
		Number	Percent
1986	13,355	1,090	8.2
1991	14,156	870	6.1
1996	15,021	985	6.6
2001	16,051	900	5.6
2006	17,402	1,030	5.9

Table 2

Change of total population and immigrant population in Fort St. John

Year	Change in Total Population	Change in Immigrants	
		Number	Percent
1986-1991	801	- 220	- 20
1991-1996	865	115	13.2
1996-2001	1,030	- 85	- 8.6
2001-2006	1,351	130	14.4

According to the profile of diversity in BC Communities (BC Stats, 2006), there are 665 people who identify themselves as a member of a visible minority population in the community. The top three groups in Fort St. John are Chinese, South Asian, and Black. The detailed information is as follows.

Table 3

Visible minority population in Fort St. John

	Total	Male	Female
Total visible minority population	665	280	385
Chinese	120	40	75
South Asian	150	70	80
Black	100	40	55
Filipino	115	45	70
Latin American	50	20	25
Southeast Asian	0	0	0
Arab	0	0	0
West Asian	20	10	10
Korean	70	25	50
Japanese	25	10	10
Visible minority	20	15	10
Multiple visible minority	0	0	0

According to British Columbia Immigration and Diversity Profiles (2006), English is the most common language in immigrants' mother tongue language.

Table 4

Home languages in B.C.

Language	Immigrants	Percentage
Total single responses	1,000	100.0
English	525	52.5
Polish	50	5.0
German	45	4.5
Korean	45	4.5
Chinese, not specified	30	3.0
Italian	30	3.0
Russian	30	3.0
Hungarian	30	3.0
Tagalog (Filipino)	20	2.0
Spanish	20	2.0

Conceptual Lens

As the general intent of this research is to understand Chinese immigrant women's experiences in remote communities of northern British Columbia, the feminist theory will be brought into context. Feminist scholars have long drawn attention to the plight of immigrant women in Canada, such as the research in working class and refugee women (e.g. Ng, 1993). In feminist theory, gender is seen as a matrix of identities, behaviours, and power relationships that are constructed by the culture of a society in accordance with sex (Boyd & Grieco, 2011). This means that the content of gender, what constitutes the ideals, expectations, and behaviours or expressions of masculinity and femininity, vary among societies. Therefore, when Chinese immigrant women come to Canada, a different society

than where they are from, they may face a dramatically different setting. On the other hand, such concepts as "race" and "sex" and the implications that result from their evocation in political practice were re-thought in the research. When it comes to the examination of Chinese immigrant women's experiences and what issues they face in remote communities of northern British Columbia, this research draws attention to different domains, such as the social construction of minority women's sexuality, feminist representations of non-western women, and the meaning and implication of family, immigration, rights, and citizenship for white and non-white women alike.

Overview of Canadian Immigration History

There is a long history of immigration to Canada. After the initial period of British and French colonization, several major peaks of immigration and settlement existed. Immigration to Canada is ongoing.

The first significant non-aboriginal immigration to Canada started in the early 1800s due to the fact that the first official legislation affecting immigration to Canada was introduced. It was the most restrictive period in Canadian immigration history and lasted for 130 years. Before Confederation most of the immigrants were from Europe. Crossing the North Atlantic was a long and perilous undertaking, even though the British government enacted legislation as early as 1803 to protect passengers and ensure their safety. Economic reasons were important forces pulling these immigrants toward the new country: poverty at home and opportunity abroad persuaded many to seek their fortunes in a new land. A growing number of people left the British Isles each year to settle in North America throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Also, the city of Québec, founded in 1608, was the

main destination for these immigrants and by 1830 Québec received on average 30, 000 new immigrants, two thirds of whom were Irish (Library and Archival Canada, 2006).

Following Confederation, Canada began to develop its own national immigration policies. The period, 1867-1895, was a national open-door policy in which Canada was more interested in enticing than it was in restricting immigration (Library and Archives Canada, 2006). It offered different benefits for immigrants. For instance, in Canada's land policy immigrants had opportunities to get free land. The Dominion Lands Act was an 1872 Canadian law aiming to encourage the settlement of Canada's prairie provinces; however, the outcome was that Canada invited mass settlement by European and American pioneers, as well as settlers from Eastern Canada.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there were hundreds of thousands of immigrants from around the world moving to Canada. A number of "push" factors, including a changing global economy, and deteriorating conditions faced by many farmers and workers in countries across Europe and Asia lead to this outcome (Library and Archives Canada, 2006). According to The Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Oliver, 1967), the reasons for the increase of immigration in Canada in the early 20th centuries were:

1. Factors in Europe contributing to emigration:

- Collapse of the social structure;
- Transformation of agriculture and industry;
- Precipitous increase in population.

2. Factors leading to increase in immigration in Canada, late 1890s to 1914:

- Yukon gold rush (1897-1899);

- Completion of the first continental railway (CPR 1885) and building of other lines;
- Closing of the American frontier;
- New developments in dry land farming;
- Canadian government's first concentrated policy to promote immigration.

Moreover, a vigorous immigration policy to get people to settle and populate the West was started. For instance, Laurier's Minister of the Interior from 1896-1905, Clifford Sifton, desired to populate western Canada with farmers in order to add to the production of the country, solve the "railway problem", and help pay the national debt (British Immigration in Montreal, 2009). The government offered free homesteads to applicants who qualified. In this period, Canadian immigration policies were largely aimed at attracting immigrants by hook or by crook.

In the early twentieth century, Canada began to control the flow of immigrants, adopting policies that excluded applicants whose ethnic origins were not European (Smick, 2006). Canadians' attitudes towards immigration changed during the first three decades of the 20th century. Through more restrictive immigration legislation, the Canadian government selected and excluded immigrants. Due to the policy in this period immigrants suffered hardship, particularly Asian immigrants. In 1906, according to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, the purpose of the Immigration Act was "to enable the Department of Immigration to deal with undesirable immigrants" by providing a means of control. The categories of "prohibited" immigrants were expanded. The Act also gave the government legal authority to deport immigrants within two years of landing (later extended to three and then five years) (Dench, 2010).

In addition, from 1906 to 1920, Canada moved to exclude immigration from Asia. After Asian immigrants completed work, such as building the Canadian Pacific Railroad, clearing and farming difficult land, and helping to establish the lumber, fishing, and mining industries of British Columbia, they attempted to settle in Canada. However, they found themselves pronounced inferior and undesirable by the country's establishment. From speeches by politicians to editorials in daily newspapers, it was clear that Asians were not welcome in a land populated by European Canadians (Library and Archives Canada, 2006). After Japan's entry into World War II on December 7, 1941, Japanese Canadians were removed from the West Coast. The exclusion from the west coast was to continue for several years until 1949. The massive injustice was a culmination of the movement to eliminate Asians from the west coast begun decades earlier in British Columbia.

In the Canadian immigrant history, immigrants from non-Caucasian countries sometimes suffer unequal treatments. Caucasians were preferred in certain periods (e.g., in immigration selections British, Irish, French, and U.S. immigrants were preferred).

Immigration Policy

The Immigration Act in Canada was created in 1976 and came into effect in 1978. It serves to divide Canadian residents into two categories: citizens and landed immigrants, by subjecting immigrants to special rules and regulations. Based on this act, more power was given to provinces to set their own immigration laws and to define "prohibited classes" in much broader terms. According to the Act, individuals who could potentially be a burden on social welfare or health services would be refused entry. Many immigrants are afraid of engaging in activities mundane to citizens for fear of consequences. For example, even joining a union may be labeled as subversive and lead to deportation (Ng & Gupta,1980).

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) was an Act of the Parliament of Canada, passed in 2002 as Bill C-11. This replaced the Immigration Act of 1976 as the primary federal legislation regulating Immigration to Canada. There are three main categories of applying for permanent residency (Government of Canada, 2002):

- Family class members are required to have one of the following specified relationships to a Canadian citizen or permanent resident: spouse, common-law partner, child, parent, or other prescribed family member. The news release accompanying the bill stated that "child" will be defined to include those under age 22 (currently under age 19), and "common-law partner" will be defined to include same-sex partners.
- Economic class members are selected on the basis of their ability to become economically established in Canada.
- Refugees are divided into two sub-groups: Convention refugees, and persons in similar circumstances. Convention refugees and protected persons are divided into four subclasses: the Convention refugees overseas class; the Convention refugees in Canada class; the humanitarian class; and the persons in need of protection class. The former two would be included in the "Convention refugee" class, and the latter two would be folded into the "persons in similar circumstances" grouping.

The differences between 2002 IRPA and Immigration Act of 1976 include (Bouchard, 2008):

- In order to attract younger bilingual and educated workers there are a few changes in the skilled workers category.

- Applicants' with a trade certificate or a second degree; applicants who are fluent in French or English language are emphasized.
- Changes in age factor.
- Experience on first two years in the new country is not given greater weight as before.
- Common-law partner is included in the family category.
- Detention is more powerful than before.
- Undocumented protected person category is eliminated.

The Population of Immigrant Women

The majority of females immigrating to Canada come with their family. Of all foreign born females admitted to Canada in the decade between 1994 and 2003: 36% were considered family class immigrants, while another 37% came as the spouse or dependant of an economic immigrant. At the same time, just over one in 10 female immigrants arrived as an economic immigrant themselves, while another 10% were admitted as refugees (Statistics Canada, 2006d).

According to *Women in Canada: A gender based statistical report* (Statistics Canada, 2006d), in 2001, 58% of all female immigrants living in Canada who arrived here in the 1990s came from Asia, including the Middle East. There was a similar trend for female immigrants coming from Africa. Of all foreign-born female residents who arrived here in the past decade, 7% were from Africa, whereas this region accounted for less than 1% of those who arrived prior to 1961.

Furthermore, in B.C., seven of ten major source countries for female immigrants are in Asia. The number of Chinese female immigrants to B.C. is 47.4%, accounting for 22.0% of

the total female immigrants in B.C. (BC Stats, 2008). Chinese females represent the largest female immigrant population in B.C.. The following table shows the top 10 countries where female immigrants are from.

Table 5

Top 10 Source Countries for the Female Immigrants Landed in B.C. (2007)

Nationality	Number Reported	% of Total Female Immigrants	% Growth 1998-2007
1. China	4,535	22.0	47.4
2. India	2,716	13.2	21.3
3. Philippines	2,217	10.7	32.4
4. U.S.A.	1,323	6.4	141.9
5. Korea	1,218	5.9	32.1
6. England	925	4.5 1	21.3
7. Taiwan	918	4.4	-61.8
8. Iran	662	3.2	-21.3
9. Japan	468	2.3	8.8
10. Vietnam	309	1.5	56.9

Social Support Networks

Social networks are characterized by rich variation at the individual level (Fowler, Dawes, & Christakis, 2009). While some people have few friends, others have many. Some people are embedded in tightly-knit groups where everyone knows each other well, whereas others belong to many different groups where there is little overlap between friends. Moreover, social networks are social structures made up of individuals or organizations, which are tied and connected by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige. Early studies have described the patterns of social relationship. For example, Barnes (1954) used the term systematically to denote patterns of ties, encompassing concepts traditionally used by the public and those used by

social scientists: bounded groups (e.g., tribes, families) and social categories (e.g., gender, ethnicity).

The strength of any tie is due to a combination of "the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (Granovetter, 1973, p 1361). Therefore, strong ties may include primary relationships, such as family and kinship relationships, that are based on important emotional linkages and/or frequent, routine interaction (Grieco, 1998). According to the research of dynamics of social support among immigrant women (Wong & Song, 2006), friends serve important supportive functions for immigrant women and these friends are mainly immigrant women who have gone through or are going through similar migration experiences.

As well, strong ties are usually associated with ethnic cultural groups because they imply cohesion (Grieco, 1998). Immigrant women from the same original country share similar experience, and they develop main supports for each other. It has a strong tie within the ethnic community. A very strong sense of "sisterhood" may form among immigrant women, and they provide each other with emotional, information, and social companionship support (Wong & Song, 2006). This type of social network can be formal or informal. For instance, in terms of Filipino in Fort St. John, they have the North Peace Filipino-Canadian Association to provide supports. In addition to the formal association, four or five Philipino women act as a smaller group. They not only work together, but also support each other in their daily life. The small group forms naturally and informally.

On the other hand, immigrant women's social networks could include weak ties. Weak ties consist of relationships among individuals that lack the same emotional strength, such as among neighbors, co-workers (Grieco, 1998), or social service providers. These are also

important because they unite diverse networks and increase the resources available to network members (Gurak & Caces, 1992, as cited in Grieco, 1998). For instance, the social services, such as settlement services and counselling programs, are provided information and service to these immigrant women and newcomers. These are different than supports and information from their own community. In this sense, either strong or weak ties benefit immigrant women to adjust to the new environment in different ways.

According to House (1981), social support distinguishes between four types of support as following (as cited in University of Twente, 2010):

- Emotional support is associated with sharing life experiences. It involves the provision of empathy, love, trust, and caring.
- Instrumental support involves the provision of tangible aid and services that directly assist a person in need. It is provided by close friends, colleagues, and neighbors.
- Informational support involves the provision of advice, suggestions, and information that a person can use to address problems.
- Appraisal support involves the provision of information that is useful for self-evaluation purposes: constructive feedback, affirmation, and social comparison.

In addition, according to Jacobson (1986), there are three types of social supports:

- Emotional support refers to behavior that fosters feelings of comforting. It leads individuals to believe that they are admired, respected, and loved, and others are available to provide caring and security to them.
- Cognitive support refers to information, knowledge, and/ or advice that helps

individuals understand their world and adjust to changes within it.

- Material support refers to goods and services that help to solve practical problems.

Social support and social networks are concepts that describe the structure, processes, and functions of social relationships. Social networks can be seen as the web of social relationships that surround individuals and social support is a consequence of the interplay between individual factors and the social environment. In this thesis, social support networks refer to social relationships surrounding immigrant women and these relationships support them in adjustment to the new country.

Immigrant Women's Issues in Remote Northern B.C.

When it comes to analysis of immigrant women's issues in remote northern B.C., a holistic perspective is significant and appropriate. An individual's situation should be looked at from a holistic perspective and the social worker can address the different dimensions of the individual's adaptation to their environmental situation (Appleby, Colon, & Hamilton, 2007). For example, from the person-in-environment (PIE) perspective, social workers can describe and understand clients' conditions from different views, such as at micro, meso, and macro levels. The ecological framework provides a foundation for analyzing the complex issues at the intersection of various social identities and the interaction of these with different level factors, (Guruge & Collins, 2008), such as at micro, meso, and macro levels.

In addition, because immigrant clients face a multiplicity of problems, all of which are complex, social workers tend to look at the immigrant's problems and their solutions in a compartmentalized way. For instance, in cross-cultural and international research on gender-based violence, many of the factors contributing to immigrant women's hardships are systemic, and the core factors in the etiology of abusive behaviour toward women are the

structure of women's relationships and their social-economic and cultural contexts (Merali, 2008). The factors immigrant women face regarding violence are complex. Therefore, by discussing different issues that immigrant women face in remote communities of northern B.C., it is helpful and fitting to approach, organize, and integrate the information about the immigrants' adaptation and their problems without overlooking and minimizing basic intrapersonal-interpersonal processes and without missing the totality of interactions that are preventing adaptation.

Although these aspects are discussed separately, they are usually interdependent and can interact with other factors, adding to the complex nature of immigrant women's situations. For instance, three factors: language barriers, economic conditions, and the unequal power relationship between immigrant women and their husbands, are interrelated. Being unable to speak English fluently obviously affects one's ability to work in Canada; hence, immigrant women are often financially dependent on their husbands. This further exacerbates the unequal power relationship.

On the other hand, a single factor can affect immigrant women's lives at different levels. For example, economics may affect immigrant women at the macro and micro levels. At the macro level, some immigrant women have no choice but to marry a man overseas due to the inequalities and sexism between First World countries and Third World countries; at the micro level, the unequal power between immigrant women and their husbands exists due to the lack of economic independence. Thus, not only are immigrant women's lives affected by many different and interrelated factors, but also a single factor has an effect on immigrant women at different levels. This section will discuss and analyze different factors affecting the lives of immigrant women in remote communities of northern B.C..

Cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies. The key factors contributing to violence against women pertain to cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies, all of which influence the other levels of the family's social ecology. According to Heise (1998), the factors connecting to violence against women include 1) a cultural definition to manhood connecting masculinity with dominance and male honour; 2) culturally-defined conventional gender roles; 3) men's perceived ownership over women; 4) approval of physical punishment to discipline women when they deviate from expected conventional roles or behaviors. These factors, such as cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies all impact immigrant women.

An example of the cultural factor is seen in the fact that immigrant women are vulnerable to violence even in their own culture. For instance, in many Asian communities, saving the honour of the family from shame is a priority that hinders immigrant women from reporting domestic violence, and this priority tends to be interpreted as obliging women not to scream (Narayan, 1995). They may keep any problems as secrets to maintain their marriage because of the stigma attached to a failed marriage (Belleau, 2003). As a female from Asia, I can affirm that this is true. Divorce is not allowed in some traditional families and societies. The women whose marriages end in divorce shame their family and their family "loses face" to their extending families, friends, and work colleagues. In particular, in Chinese culture, domestic violence is regarded as a family affair and not to be shared with outsiders. From childhood, people have been taught that "domestic shame should not be made public", so they keep domestic violence as a secret, even if they are in foreign contexts where people's marital concepts are different.

Discrimination, racism, and sexism all exist, but are unfortunately more common in remote settings. In the policy research (Cote et al., 2001), most immigrant women believe

that they have been subjected to discrimination based on their skin colour, ethnic origin, language, or the fact that they are women. Discrimination based on race is not necessarily practiced in an immediate and overt manner, such as a direct insult, or refusal of services. Usually it occurs systemically, and people may not be conscious of their actions. Moreover, compared to urban communities, the immigrant population is smaller in remote communities, so people are not as familiar with getting along with certain groups of immigrants; therefore, they may have prejudices about some immigrants. Their behaviour may make visible minorities feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. As a personal example, when making purchases in Prince George, I found that cashiers tended not to explain anything to me, but they usually did explain services and guarantees to other customers. This makes me feel uncomfortable and as an outsider. I noticed the opposite in big cities such as Vancouver or Toronto, where service providers had no issues talking to me. Understandably, they have more opportunities to interact with immigrants and know more about them. I can only speak for myself, and this does not necessarily represent all immigrant women's experiences; however, my experience demonstrates people's misunderstanding of immigrants and their prejudices in remote communities. It may intensify the conditions of discrimination, racism, and sexism among immigrant women in remote settings.

Economic, ethnic, and cultural factors affecting immigrant women's lives are usually interdependent. Belleau (2003) notes that the inequalities and sexism between First World countries and Third World countries result in a thriving mail order bride trade. The mail order bride industry exploits the economic inequality between poor countries and prosperous countries. Moreover, this phenomenon leads to subordination based on ethnicity, sex, and social class within a country, between countries, and between individuals. Additionally,

Narayan (1995) mentions that immigrant women face racism and gender-related forms of powerlessness in foreign contexts. They also encounter sexism and cultural chauvinism in their own immigrant communities where the leaders are most often men. These disadvantageous conditions form a constellation of forces which not only render immigrant women highly vulnerable to domestic violence, but impede them from taking action to terminate or escape the violence they face.

Economic inequality between countries. The lives of immigrant women either in remote communities of northern B.C. or other places around the world are affected by unequal economic conditions. In spite of the fact that a few researchers (e.g., Minervivi & McAndrew, 2006) claim that women willing to become mail order brides do not appear to have a different agenda than other mate-seeking women; they simply have discovered a novel way to expand their pool of prospective husbands. Many studies (e.g., Belleau, 2003; Constable, 2003; Philippine Women Centre of B.C, 2000) have shown that mail order brides resort to the situation due to different agendas, such as poor economic conditions. For instance, economic inequality between different countries is one possible explanation for the success of the mail order bride industry. In the book, *Romance on a global stage: Pen pals, virtual ethnography, and "mail order" marriages*, Constable (2003) utilizes Glodava and Onizuka's research to depict Asian women as economically desperate to move to the United States, which is a common assumption when it comes to the reasons why mail order brides marry foreigners. It shows that unequal political and economic relationships between developing and industrialized nations cause inequalities between the partners in the marital transaction of the mail order brides. Also, as mentioned earlier, the mail order bride trend

thrives on the economic inequality between poor and prosperous countries (Belleau, 2003). The point of unequal political and economic standing is a recurring one.

In a global world, marrying males from developed countries may bring some economic benefits to the country if the couple gives money and resources to the woman's family. Also, marriage to a male from a developed country may be seen as a way to improve the plight of a woman in a developing country. Many immigrant women come from backgrounds marked by grinding poverty (Belleau, 2003; Narayan, 1995). In Third World countries, the government and citizens look abroad for solutions to reduce poverty and social problems because of the economic predicament (Belleau, 2003). Immigrant women who wish to escape the poverty in their own countries may accept a mail order marriage (Philippine Women Centre of B.C., 2000). Additionally, in some cultures, families educate their children to contribute back to the family and may expect them to "save" their family by providing financial support once they are overseas (Constable, 2003). These situations may occur to immigrant women who marry males either in remote communities of northern B.C. or other locations in the world.

Social isolation. Due to language barriers and cultural differences, it is difficult for immigrant women to express themselves properly and make new friends. Ambiguity around appropriate behaviour often affects immigrant women's confidence and ability to interact in various contexts (Kelaher, Potts, & Manderson, 2001). On the other hand, the sociability of Canadians is perceived as being very different from immigrant women's, which contributes to their isolation as newly arrived immigrants. In particular, the coldness of relations with Canadians affects immigrant women's ability to recreate a solid social network (Cote et al.,

2001). All of these factors result in immigrant women feeling isolated from mainstream society.

Immigrant women in remote communities of northern B.C. encounter even more difficulty in terms of isolation. According to the video, "No Life For a Woman (1979)" and research interviews (Worfolk, 2002), women discuss the difficulties of being a newcomer in a town, of staying connected to friends and family back home, and of meeting people and making new friends. The complexity of friendship between women in general is difficult enough, even for non-immigrants. It is harder still for immigrant women who may experience language, cultural, and geographical isolation in remote settings. All of the factors may intensify immigrant women's feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

Lastly, the lack of a social safety network, and lack of connection of marriage migrants to any immigration or community agencies may prohibit women from seeking and obtaining assistance when marital problems develop (Merali, 2008), especially in remote communities. For example, women who live outside of the town are generally isolated until they learn to drive, and the option of learning to drive is often determined by their husbands (Kelaher et al., 2001). Reaching out for help is not only difficult, but potentially dangerous if they are completely dependent on abusive partners to drive them to appointments and interpret for them (Jiwani, 2001). As well, rural health workers care for people they know; friends, family, acquaintances, colleagues; even their children's teachers (Veale, 2010). Therefore, in remote settings, for health professionals, maintaining a proper distance from their clients in communities where everybody knows each other is difficult; for immigrant women, seeking assistance outside the home and being visited by health-care workers at their home will likely be noticed (Kelaher et al., 2001). These concerns may affect their willingness to ask for

assistance. Under these circumstances, immigrant women living in remote communities may hardly connect to other people or agencies outside the community, or even outside their home.

Language barriers. The language barrier is one of the most common issues immigrant women face, and it affects their life on a broad scale. For example, language ability affects immigrant women's employment opportunities. Many studies (e.g., Kelaher et al., 2001; Narayan, 1995) have mentioned that language barriers are one of the significant factors affecting immigrant women's life in foreign contexts. Due to the lack of appropriate language training support, immigrant women indicate that their inadequate command of the English language specific to their professions (in engineering, accounting, medicine, for example) poses a barrier to employment (Man, 2004). Despite being highly educated and highly skilled, many immigrant women, if employed at all, are segregated into low-paying service sector jobs (Philippine Women Centre of B.C., 2000).

Language barriers can be a major concern when it comes to immigrant women's health issues, especially in remote communities of northern B.C.. Sometimes immigrant women do not have a good enough grasp of English to be able to express or communicate their concerns or to even understand others. According to the study (Kelaher et al,, 2001), when immigrant women ask health professionals for help, determining what kind of language is appropriate in a particular situation is one of their concerns. Although many health agencies, such as hospitals, have free interpreter services for those who ask, the services are usually explained in English. The lack of multiple language services worsens immigrant women's situations in remote settings. From personal experience in working at the immigration agency in Fort St. John, I found that many immigrant women could not speak any English at all. Contrary to

immigration agencies available in a big city, in Fort St. John, there was no one who could speak multiple languages. It compounds immigrant women's difficulties in remote settings.

In Fort St. John, there are three agencies serving immigrants: FSJ Literacy Society, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Northern BC Newcomers Integration Service Centre, and Settlement Worker In Schools (SWIS) at School District 60. However, multiple language services are barely offered in these agencies. Moreover, in these three agencies with the exception of English, Spanish and Chinese are the only two languages provided. Other language services, such as French, Tagalog, and Punjabi, are not offered in these agencies. Speaking to other remote communities where the population may be smaller than Fort St. John, the multiple language services for immigrants seem even more inaccessible. Although phone translation services could be one option in these communities, it is at a high cost. For those who cannot afford the cost of translation services, it is problematic. The lack of complete services for immigrants living in the remote communities of northern B. C. makes their situations more difficult.

Culture shock. Immigrant women may experience culture shock, especially when first arriving in a new country. According to Zapf (1993), culture shock is defined as a condition in which one's initial feeling of optimism and challenge turns into frustration and confusion as a result of one's inability to interact with the new environment in a meaningful way. This section explores how culture shock affects immigrant women due to their own views and expectations of the world, and their unique conditions in remote communities of northern B.C..

First of all, immigrant women may strive to be culturally competent in and adaptive to different cultural environments. People see, interpret, and evaluate things in different ways. What is considered appropriate behaviour in one culture is sometimes the opposite in another;

thus, misunderstanding can arise when immigrant women use their own interpretations in foreign contexts.

Secondly, as different cultures have certain expectations about particular roles, women's roles are different in Eastern and Western cultures. In reality, the transition in different cultures is much like what people experience in their everyday lives when confronted by change (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). For example, according to Chung (2007), the core traditional Chinese gender value for females who are married is self-sacrificial. They are also expected to serve as the primary caretaker within the household. Once they arrive in Canada, for instance, the gender values are completely different. Immigrant women may expect to play a role as a career woman rather than a housewife or homemaker. The emotional conflicts experienced by immigrant women relate to the challenges they face in consolidating old and new cultural values, and developing new bicultural identities (Chung, 2007).

In addition, unique conditions in remote communities may result in culture shock for immigrant women. Before coming to Canada, many of these immigrant women have expectations of a beautiful and developed Canada. They dream and believe that they will make a better life for themselves (Cote et al., 2001). However, once arriving in a remote community, many are disillusioned. The "developed country" is not as they imagined because of many challenges they face in remote communities. For instance, some communities do not have the large stores they are used to due to the small population. I, too, found this situation a shock, as a newcomer from Asia.

Finally, severe weather conditions in northern B.C. may also be a surprise and make adaptation to the new country even more difficult. Some places in northern B.C. often

experience heavy snowfalls and extreme temperatures during winter. Even for the local residents, being cut off from the main highway because of heavy snowfall may lead to feelings of anxiety and "cabin fever" (Worfolk, 2002). Immigrant women may be surprised and unprepared for extreme weather conditions and the resulting consequences.

Unequal power structure between immigrant women and their husbands. The unequal power relationship between immigrant women and their husbands exists due to immigration policies and economic dependence. The concept of sponsorship exacerbates the vulnerability and dependency of immigrant women in relation to their husbands (Cote et al., 2001; Ng & Gupta, 1980). Males often control family wealth and resources, and play traditional gender roles in the marital relationship (Cote et al., 2001), especially for those forming new families through transnational marriages, such as mail order brides. On the other hand, in terms of those immigrant women reuniting family members from whom they were separated through the migration process, entering the workforce may challenge the traditional male family supporter's role, which causes marital conflict and stress. In this section, the power structure and relationship between immigrant women and their husbands is discussed.

The power and relationship between immigrant women and their husbands are also unequal due to immigration policies either in Eastern or Western countries. For example, Korean and Taiwanese government policies have created a disadvantage for female immigrants, particularly in the past (Lee, 2008). These disadvantages due to policy also occur in Canada. Police and other institutions that enforce criminal law are supposed to be sensitive to gender and domestic violence, but in reality, police and others in the legal system sometimes act as barriers rather than promoters of justice (Philippine Women Centre of B.C.,

2000). In some ways, the sponsorship system in Canada may make immigrant women easily dependent on their sponsors, who are legally responsible for them financially. The sponsorship regime creates a legal relationship between spouses which is likely to contribute to a dynamic of control and subordination within a couple, thereby reinforcing the inequality of women (Cote et al., 2001). For instance, in order to be eligible to be permanent residents or citizens, immigrant women must be sponsored by their husbands. A husband has to demonstrate his ability to financially support his wife for a period of 3 years after her arrival (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). In these years after arriving, women have no independent access to resources and are not eligible to receive any social benefits. Their legal status, as sponsored immigrants, automatically eliminates them from social services and benefits available to other Canadians (Ng & Gupta, 1980). In other words, immigrant women cannot live without their husbands' support in the first several years, which contributes to the inequality of the couple's relationship. As a result, fear of deportation forces them to stay in the relationship at any cost (Belleau, 2003).

This inequality stemming from financial dependence is obvious, especially in remote communities. According to the research (Ng & Gupta, 1980), non-English speaking immigrants usually occupy positions at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy earning only subsistence wages. Immigrant women often occupy precarious part-time positions and that exacerbates their dependence on their husbands (Cote et al., 2001). In a study (Ng, Man, Shan, & Liu, 2006) that traced changes in garment production and the working conditions of immigrant garment workers, they found that half of the garment workers interviewed were professionals from their home countries of China and South Asia with no prior experience in this sector. These immigrant women ended up in garment production simply because they

couldn't find other employment. On the other hand, the most northern and remote regions of Canada have limited job opportunities and very limited job growth (Canada's Rural Partnership, 2009). According to Burns (2007), job opportunities are limited to resource-based industries (e.g., mining and forestry), which requires intensive labour; therefore, in remote communities, such as Fort St. John, men are dominant in the job market. It is difficult for women to find jobs in these areas and it may be even harder for immigrant women.

Moreover, in remote and rural areas the lack of services impacts negatively on immigrant women's economic conditions. The shortage of provisions to upgrade qualifications and failure to recognize overseas qualifications leads to immigrant women's poor economic situation (Kelaher et al., 2001). Often, they cannot find jobs even if they have tertiary education. Therefore, immigrant women are financially dependent on their husbands (Merali, 2008), especially in remote communities where job opportunities are fewer than in urban centres. These husbands have extreme power over their wives.

On the contrary, for women who are reunited with family members from whom they were separated throughout the migration process, tensions between them and their husbands may result from the challenges of the male family supporter's role. Immigrant males may not be able to demonstrate financial capability to sustain their new wives or their reunited wives to live above the national poverty line, so the couples may experience significant financial strain. Many highly educated immigrants, including the males, are unemployed or underemployed due to a lack of recognition of their foreign credentials among the immigrant population (Raj & Silverman, 2002). In response to their husbands' underemployment, previously unemployed women often enter the workforce (Merali, 2008). However, this

challenges the male family supporter's role and the traditional division of labour in the family, which may cause marital conflict and stress (Raj & Silverman, 2002). This condition could happen in either urban or remote settings.

Rights-based education. When discussing immigrant women's rights in remote communities of northern B.C., rights-based education is an important issue that should be taken into account. Although sponsored immigrant women have many rights, they may not be aware of these rights for various reasons, such as the unclear nature of their status, gender socialization experiences, and the lack of any direct education about human rights for sponsored persons (Merali, 2008). Rights-based education is a critical instrument for empowering disadvantaged groups to recognize and respond to various types of human rights violations (The World Health Organization, 2003). For sponsored immigrant women, rights-based education can help with self-preservation and maintenance of personal safety in the context of their new relationship (Merali, 2008). A comprehensive view of human rights, such as the right to livelihood, education, health care, and housing, must be understood before one can comprehend the human rights violations inflicted against mail order brides (Philippine Women Centre of B.C., 2000). Also, for the general public, education is the key for preventing racist behaviours and attitudes in terms of antiracism (Yan, 2003).

Unfortunately, in remote communities, rights-based education may not be accessible to these immigrant women due to the lack of public transportation and service agencies. For example, in Fort St. John there is no public transportation for people who live just outside the community, so immigrant women without cars would not be able to participate. As well, compared to urban communities, there are only a few non-profit organizations in remote communities. As mentioned earlier, in addition to Settlement Workers In Schools, there are

only two non-profit organizations servicing immigrant women. Training and education about immigrant women's rights have been barely offered in Fort St. John. Additionally, in more remote communities there is a smaller population of immigrant women, so the services are not well developed or even available. All of the challenges show that immigrant women cannot easily reach rights-based education in remote communities of northern B.C..

Stigma of international marriages. The typical judgmental attitude that people have toward males who marry immigrant women has been shown time and again in research (e.g., Belleau, 2003; Narayan, 1995). Many of these males who seek immigrant women overseas are stereotyped as men looking for docile and submissive girls for wives (Narayan, 1995). The assumption is that they are anti-feminist and want to control their wives (Belleau, 2003). Glodava and Onizuka also suggest that men who marry mail order brides supposedly want to control their wives (as cited in Constable, 2003). There is a common stigma attached to males who get married to immigrant women, particularly mail order brides. Other stigma is that immigrant women marry foreign men in order to obtain legal immigration status in the western countries and in their relationships, love does not exist.

However, the point of view that males look for docile and submissive girls for wives does not take into account the variety of reasons that males may seek a mail order bride. First, the men who marry mail order brides potentially do want loving and enduring relationships. According to the research (Constable, 2003), these men have had failed relationships with western women, and are attempting to try something new via a cross-cultural marriage to improve their chances. The pursuit of a loving and enduring relationship is the reason that they choose to marry women from different countries.

Secondly, it should be mentioned that the male is not always the one who holds a higher position in an international marriage. For instance, one of my neighbours in Taiwan married a mail order bride from Vietnam, and the wife is the one who controls the relationship, despite the fact that he is the only one who earns income.

Finally, in remote communities of northern B.C., it may be very difficult for men to meet eligible women due to the small population and the gender imbalance. One of the reasons males may marry mail order brides is that there are no opportunities to date or meet the women from their own country due to their busy work schedule, or a restricted living environment. It may happen in remote settings where the population is small. For instance, Fort St. John, a remote community in northern B.C., has a population of 17,402 people (Statistics Canada, 2006). The total population of the 24 to 65 year old age group was only 9,325 in 2006 (BC State, 2010). A limited population makes it hard to find partners in the area. On the other hand, the gender imbalance may also lead to prosperous international marriages in remote communities. For example, in 2006, the population was 53.39% male and 47.61 % female. This constitutes the total population of 20 to 54 years olds in Fort St. John (BC State, 2010). The gender imbalance makes it more difficult for males to establish a relationship with a female; accordingly, the mail order activity creates additional opportunity to meet a woman and form a relationship.

Chapter Three: Personal Standpoint

Self-Identification as an Insider in the Immigrant Community

It is important that a study of this nature involves the author's self-reflection. Although the study could not be written without first-hand experience, my perspective takes shape in the immigrant women's presentation due to the fact that the participants, as well as the researcher, are involved in the interviews. For example, the researcher's role affects the account of immigrant women's settlement experience in different ways, such as transcripts, field notes, and discussion with research assistants.

My multiple roles as researcher, student, female, and immigrant in this study may also inadvertently affect the outcome of the study. According to Dyck and McLaren's study (2004), women's status as immigrants or refugees intersected with gendered, racialized, and classed identities in shaping the account of their stories. Race, class, and gender are categories closely associated with the "immigrant" category.

Additionally, my personal experience in Canada assists me to understand these immigrant women's experiences and stories at profoundly different levels. Speaking to my own experience, this is my third year in Canada and every year I move to a different place: the first year I was in Regina; the second year I lived in Prince George, and the third year I am in Fort St. John where I based myself while conducting my research. These experiences aroused my interests and curiosity in these areas; hence, I decided to explore the immigrant women's experience through their personal stories. Furthermore, when communicating with these immigrant women, we share the "common language" and the stories impact each other. The collective experience empowers us and we know that we are not alone in the remote community.

I consider myself as an insider in the immigrant community. It is important for a researcher to locate oneself, put oneself forward and clarify one's role in the study (Absolon & Willett, 2005). I "locate" myself as an insider to explore the issues of immigrant women; therefore, I see the connection between immigrant women and myself; I suppose that I share similar experiences and personal stories with these immigrant women; I regard myself as a part of them even if I do not share their experiences exactly. The insider's perspective affects my passion, my assumptions, and biases in this study.

First, as an insider in the immigrant community, I have a passion for research. It is impossible for a person to conduct studies if the research is entirely unrelated to one personally and has no connection with one's experience (Absolon & Willett, 2005). I, for instance, have a stake in the issue of immigrant women and am enthusiastic and able to research this topic adequately. An objective scientist may not pay as much attention as researchers whose benefits or interests relate to this issue. Accordingly, this may add value to the study.

Second, my study may be affected by an insider's point of view. I am familiar with some immigrant women's experience, which shapes my study. For example, as a woman from Asia, I know there are different expectations of marriage between people from Western and Eastern societies, and it may affect their feelings about married life; hence, I choose to examine the quality of cross-border marriages. Additionally, Western societies appear to be more individualistic, whereas in Eastern societies people tend to regard themselves as part of their family. In Asian culture, to act independently of one's family is sometimes considered selfish and immature, but it is valued in Western societies. Therefore, I intend to focus on

how the different culture affects immigrant women's behaviour, even if it is in a foreign context.

Furthermore, as a female newcomer, I assert a specific set of experiences based on immigrants' cultural, racial, and political location. For instance, immigrant women, who are from the "third world" and marry Canadian men who are dominant in society, may depend on their "first world husbands" economically. They may be in marginal groups in the society, and know few of their rights in this new country (So, 2006). They are in an unjust situation; thus, my motivation is to analyze how immigrant women prevent and promote a successful integration into mainstream society, and to reduce social injustice.

Next, I believe that the "personal is political" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In feminist terms, the "personal is political" refers to the theory that personal problems are political problems, which basically means that many of the personal problems women experience in their lives are not their fault, but are the result of systematic oppression (Hanisch, 2006). In addition to individual experiences, attention should be given to the history of the immigrant community. These may relate to immigration policies in the past, present, and future. For example, before June 2002, "first world husbands" had tremendous power, which increased abuse, since the brides were often illegal immigrants in Canada if they did not meet the requirements within ninety days under the immigration law (Belleau, 2003). It shows that an individual is affected by the history and policy directed to the immigrant community. Consequently, careful consideration should be given to the history and policies that relate to and impact immigrant women's personal experiences and lives in the past, present, and future.

Finally, as an insider, I know that biases do exist. I reflect on the implications of the above assumptions, and find that there is yet another assumption behind these: the idea that all immigrant women who marry Canadians require assistance. I challenge the idea that all immigrant women are vulnerable and must be helped. This may be a bias, and should be examined closely. In particular, there may be immigrant women who can adjust to the new environment and have a satisfying marriage (Belleau, 2003). As well, compared to women who immigrate to Canada by themselves, sponsored immigrant women may have more assistance due to their husbands and family.

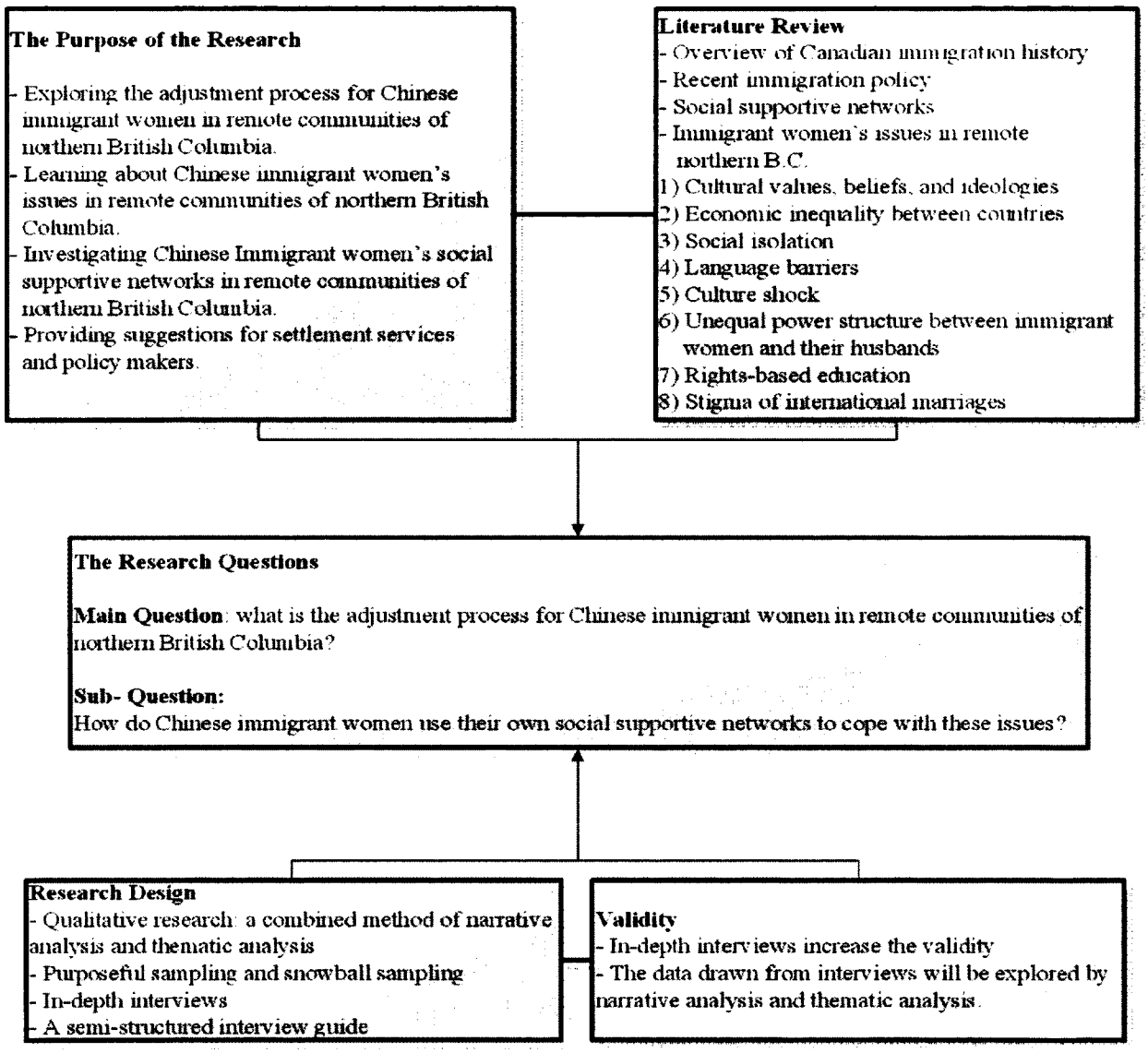
As a female newcomer, I realize that it is impossible to represent all immigrant communities even if we do share some experiences. As Absolon and Willett state, "I speak and write truly from my own position, experiences, and perspectives" (2005, p. 99). Immigrant women may be from different cultures and have dissimilar experiences and backgrounds, so their stories and experiences are unique. Based on this assumption in my study, I will locate relevant and distinct aspects of the self instead of making broad general statements, and acknowledge that immigrant women are not all the same.

Chapter Four: Research Procedure

My research adopts narrative analysis and thematic analysis to investigate Chinese immigrant women's experience and their social support networks in remote communities of northern B.C.. This section covers six parts: research topic; methodology; research sample; data collection methods; data analysis; and recruitment of participants. The following figure is the framework of this research:

Figure 1

The framework of the Research



Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to explore the adjustment process and issues for Chinese immigrant women in remote communities of northern B.C. and how their social support networks function. This includes issues such as the difficulties Chinese immigrant women face, particularly as a result of the remote setting; life adjustment processes; strategies in

adjusting to their new environment; and social support networks. "In the context of female immigration and relationships, the mail order bride phenomena are also examined through the eyes of four of my participants who came overseas through transnational marriages.

The primary question is "what is the adjustment process for Chinese immigrant women in remote communities of northern British Columbia". In order to provide a solid base from which to ask this question, a sub-question is investigated: "How do Chinese immigrant women use their own social support networks to cope with these issues"? These topics are examined through the main question and the sub-question.

Research Methodology

In this study, I use a combined method of narrative analysis and thematic analysis in the qualitative research domain. Qualitative research helps to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Instead of simply accepting the quantitative data, an individual's interpretation of their own experiences is important; hence, access and insight into Chinese immigrant women's experiences in remote settings are provided. By using qualitative research, I gained a rich and complex understanding of Chinese immigrant women's experiences.

Additionally, qualitative research is suitable for exploring new areas of inquiry. There are many studies associated with Chinese immigrant women in urban settings, whereas there are few recent studies to describe Chinese immigrant women's issues and their social support networks in remote communities, especially in northern B.C.. Consequently, qualitative research is an appropriate method of exploring this topic.

I also use a combined method of narrative analysis and thematic analysis. Parker and Shotter (1990) describe a narrative as the verbal recounting of life events as a story. The story

is usually presented chronologically as the events occur, but may also include elaborate descriptions of the people involved and any other connected circumstances (Hardy, Gregory, & Ramjeet, 2009). In other words, narrative research is the study of stories. Stories are told by people about themselves and about others as part of their everyday conversations. In addition to the stories that appear in people's ordinary conversations, narrative researchers study stories they solicit from others: oral stories obtained through interviews and written stories through requests (Polkinghorne, 2007). It provides an opportunity for Chinese immigrant women's voices to be heard. I interviewed Chinese immigrant women in northern B.C., to collect their stories and experiences and reiterate them in my research.

On the other hand, I am also interested in how Chinese immigrant women convey their experiences to others and construct meaning from sharing. Rather than concentrating on the story, it is the form or structure of the narrative that also became the focus. Holstein and Gubrium (2002) describe this as a concern with how people form an understanding of their self-identities, their activities and their context, and their sense of self in relation to their world. An understanding of Chinese immigrant women's experiences and interpretations before they immigrated to Canada is gained through narrative research and their stories retold.

Finally, in addition to narrative research, I use thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An inductive approach is adopted in which the analysis is based on the identification of themes in the data. Six main themes and 19 sub-themes emerged from the data without pre-determined categories, addressing issues that Chinese immigrant women confront in remote settings.

Research Participants

I utilized purposeful sampling as well as snowball sampling, and interviewed eight Chinese immigrant women. According to Koerber and McMichael (2008), in purposeful sampling, researchers look for "participants who possess certain traits or qualities" (p 464). The specific requirements of my samples are women who are:

a) from overseas, preferably from Mainland China;

b) came to Canada under sponsorship or with their husbands;

c) speak English as a second language;

d) live in remote communities of northern British Columbia.

Additionally, I adopted snowball sampling as a way of gathering participants. In snowball sampling, a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic are contacted and these participants are used to establish contacts with other potential participants (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). This method has been used in other studies to gather samples of immigrant women (e.g., Tastsoglou & Miedema, 2003). I initially made contact with four Chinese immigrant women and asked them to refer me others who fit the study requirements, then followed up with those people. Through this sampling method, I contacted 15 potential participants.

Chinese immigrant women, including mail order brides, were interviewed to explore the female perspective on Chinese immigrant women's issues and their social support networks in remote settings. The goal of the research decides how samples are selected (Koerber & McMichael, 2008); hence, in order to balance different points of view and allow my particpants' voices to be heard, I also included mail order brides in my study. My final sample was eight Chinese immigrant women from northern B.C.: four of them formed new

families through transnational marriages and those may be identified as mail order brides; three of them came to Canada with their husbands; and the rest of them reunited with family members from whom they were separated through the migration process.

I chose to use a sample of eight participants to control quality and due to realistic constraints. Although the sample size is indeed small, as long as participants have a certain degree of expertise about the area of inquiry, small samples can be adequate in providing complete and accurate information within a particular cultural context (Romney, Weller, & Batchelder, 1986). Quality is more important than quantity (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Small samples, therefore, should be acceptable in light of the goal of my research, which is to understand Chinese immigrant women's circumstances on more specific terms, rather than making broad generalizations. In terms of reality, northern communities have a proportionally small Chinese immigrant population compared to big cities such as Vancouver, so the sample size reflects this constraint.

Data Collection

The research was designed to include face to face in-depth interviews with each participant using a semi-structured interview guide. The in-depth interview is a technique used to elicit a vivid picture of participants' perspectives on the research topic (Mack et al., 2005).The details of the interviews can increase validity so that the information gained from the interviews is reliable (Seidman, 2006).

The length of interviews is also important. Interviews must have a chronological beginning, middle, and end to maintain a steady pace and gather enough information (Seidman, 2006). Thus, I divided the questionnaire in a semi-structured guide into five parts to better control the quality as well as length of the interviews.

I recruited a Chinese immigrant woman, who was but not from Mainland China, as a volunteer to conduct a pre-test of the interview guide with me. We went through a 90-minute face to face interview in Mandarin, after which she offered me feedback. Based on her suggestions, I reorganized the semi-structured interview guide, translated the guide into Chinese, and accepted Chinese signatures in participants' consent forms. Her contribution was key in my later interviews.

In addition, through two successive interviews, my relationship with the participants developed and greater degrees of personal information were explored. They were offered plenty of time to think and reflect on their answers. By adopting consecutive interviews, I established a strong rapport with participants over a longer period of time, which benefits the results of the interviews (Seidman, 2006). Participants are better able to establish and reconstruct the content of their experience and draw meaning from it (Seidman, 2006); this allows them to structure their own interpretation, explanation, and experience through the interview. Using two successive interviews, Chinese immigrant women are given more opportunities and time to reflect on questions, as well as their lives in general. For example, they can consider the meaning of questions, such as why they have or have never thought about them, and why they may resist certain ideas unconsciously.

There was the challenge of asking participants to attend two interviews. Realistically, there were unpredictable factors such as distractions during the interviews or events preventing women from joining the interviews again. Some had to work six or seven days a week and also had to take care of their children leading to inflexible schedules. As long as sufficient information was gathered, I accepted one interview from some participants to work

around this obstacle. In total, two participants completed two successive interviews and six participants completed one interview.

Data Analysis

Through narrative analysis and thematic analysis, data drawn from interviews were analyzed in this research. First of all, I briefly retold and portrayed the participants' stories and experiences before they came to Canada. This part of the interviews was chosen to illustrate who they were and why they decided to immigrate. After that, I used thematic analysis to analyze data. There are several general steps that I followed, as described below (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The first step was to transcribe data, read and reread the data, and note down initial ideas. I am a Mandarin speaker, but from Taiwan, so it was not necessarily straightforward, since Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese Chinese are different in some ways. After an initial transcription, I listened to the digital records again in their entirety and ensured I did not drop or misinterpret words. This took six weeks. I read these transcriptions again and again until I was familiarized with the data.

The second step was to code interesting features of the data from the entire data set and to collate the data relevant to each code. I printed out all of the transcripts and manually highlighted and coded the data.

The third step was to collate codes into potential themes and sub-themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme and sub-theme. Then, I clarified and identified themes and sub-themes. I reviewed these and examined whether the themes work in relation to the coded extract and the entire data set. Also, I mapped the themes and sub-themes, visually indicating transparent relationships.

The fourth step was to define and name the themes and sub-themes. I continued to analyze and refine the specifics of each theme and sub-theme, generating clear definitions and names.

The final step was to produce the report. I selected the examples and themes relevant to my research topic and which represented the meanings of the participants' lives and experiences in remote communities of northern B.C..

Recruitment of Participants

I recruited participants through personal social networks, promotion of the research program in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and participation in cultural activities. Participants were also compensated with a ten dollar Tim Horton's gift card.

First of all, as an insider in the immigrant community and as a foreign student from Taiwan, I have personal connections with Chinese immigrant women, and it was a way to recruit potential participants in my research. I volunteered to help immigrants, such as acting as a translator, and attended an ESL class at the Literacy Society, where I introduced my research program and recruited participants. Therefore, before formally contacting participants, I had already asked some of them about being part of my research because we had met previously.

The above activities provided me many opportunities to meet people and be involved in the Chinese community since the summer of 2010. The experience of working as a summer program coordinator for immigrant children and a settlement worker in schools offered me the opportunity to be well-acquainted with immigrant families.

In addition, participating in multiple cultural events or activities was a significant opportunity to approach potential participants. There are three multicultural service

organizations in Fort St. John, including the Literacy Society, the S.U.C.C.E.S.S., and Settlement Workers In Schools (SWIS). A regular meeting among all three groups is conducted every month and various activities are organized together. I had the opportunity to meet immigrants from the school system, other agencies, and surrounding areas. This helped me approach Chinese immigrant women and families for the study.

While I was able to build relationships with Chinese immigrant women through these activities, they also gave me the chance to explain the purpose of my research. Through this process, I could introduce myself as well as having a chance to use "fieldwork strategies" proposed by Shaver (2005): clarifying my study purposes and allowing them, either Chinese immigrant women or their husbands, to more readily trust me, and to avoid the sense that I was intruding into their private lives. Participations in activities assisted me in approaching women, as well as understanding the families better.

Summary

Through interviews with eight Chinese immigrant women, this thesis explores the adjustment process for Chinese immigrant women; identifies Chinese immigrant women's issues; investigates Chinese immigrant women's social support networks; and provides suggestions for settlement services and social work professionals. This research is done in the context of remote communities of northern B. C., using a combined method of narrative analysis and thematic analysis in the qualitative research domain, as well as purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. Face to face in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide were part of the research design, and the data gathered from interviews were retold by a narrative method and analyzed by thematic analysis. In the next section, the findings drawn from the data will be presented.

Chapter Five: Research Findings

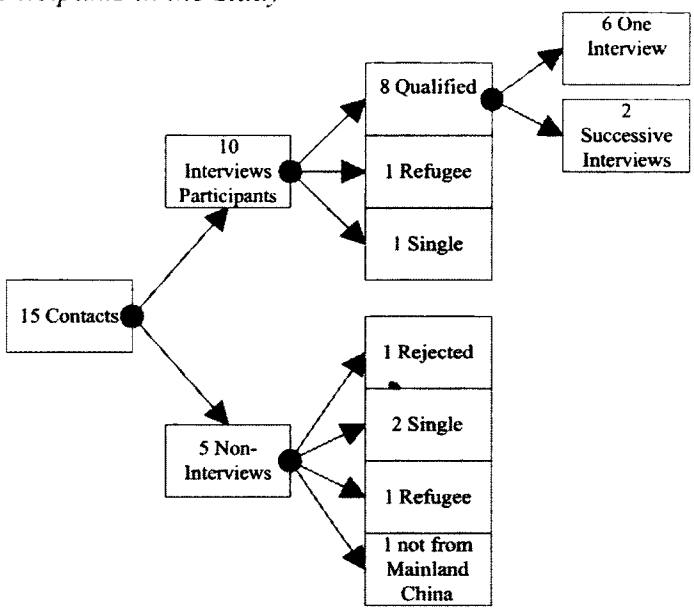
"Climate is really harsh, but people are really friendly."
(Tiger, Chinese Immigrant Woman, Page14-Line27).

Participants in the Study

Of the 15 participants I was in touch with: one declined to participate in the research; one was not from Mainland China, so she was not an eligible interviewee; and three came to Canada as a refugee or a single person, and therefore they were not qualified for this research. I conducted 12 interviews with 10 individuals; in other words, two of the participants were interviewed twice and the remainder interviewed once for a total of 12 interviews. Additionally, among these 10 participants, two of them were not qualified for my research: one came to Canada under the refugee category although she is a Chinese immigrant, and the other met her husband one year after she came to Canada. The qualified candidates of the research must be Chinese women coming from overseas with their husbands or through transnational marriages. The following figure shows the numbers of participants:

Figure 2

Participants in the Study



In total, the number of participants in my research project is eight Chinese immigrant women who came to Canada either with their husbands or under their husband's sponsorship. Two of them conducted two successive interviews, whereas the rest of them contributed to one interview. In total, I was able to use 10 interviews and I named these eight participants by order of Chinese zodiac: rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, and sheep. Like the Chinese zodiac, each animal represents a different personality, as with each participant.

Demographic Information

Table 6 provides demographic information about the participants. Details such as provinces from where they came, and their children are not given due to confidentiality. These are small communities, and the immigrant population is equally small and well known to the immigrant community or even the whole community. The demographic information is not given to protect participants' confidentiality and ensure that the research is anonymous.

Table 6

Demographics of Participants (Chinese immigrant women)

Name	**1. Rat**	**2. Ox**	**3. Tiger**	**4. Hare**
Age	38	44	47	40
Educational level	University	University	University	College
The Level of English (defined by themselves)	Intermediate	Fundamental	Proficient	Fundamental
Residence time in Canada	8 years	1 year and 6 months	11 years	6 years
Marital Status	Married	Married	Divorced	Married
Age of Ex-Husband/ Husband	48	48	49	42
Educational level of Ex-husband/Husband	Master	College	College	High School
Financial Standing of the Household (defined by themselves)	Middle	Low	Middle	Middle
Note (Method of Entry into Canada)	Married to a Chinese Canadian	Married to a Canadian	Immigrated to Canada with husband	Reunited with husband
Name	**5. Dragon**	**6. Snake**	**7. Horse**	**8. Sheep**
Age	45	45	30	46
Educational level	University	University	University	College
The Level of English (defined by themselves)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Fundamental
Residence time in Canada	10 years	4 years	3 years	1 year and 7 months
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Married
Age of Ex-Husband/ Husband	46	45	32	50
Educational level of Ex-husband/Husband	PhD	University	Master (Uncompleted)	College
Financial Standing of the Household (defined by themselves)	Middle	Middle	Middle	Low
Note (Method of Entry into Canada)	Immigrated to Canada with husband	Immigrated to Canada with husband	Married to a Chinese Canadian	Married to a Canadian

Qualitative Analysis

The research project intends to explore the adjustment process for Chinese immigrant women, and to learn about Chinese immigrant women's issues in remote communities of northern British Columbia. Qualitative data are collected through face to face in-depth interviews and Chinese immigrant women's stories appear from their oral narration obtained through interviews. For the purpose of this research, the data is analyzed by a combined method of narrative analysis and thematic analysis. This research demonstrates how Chinese immigrant women's expectations and reality are different, which creates difficulties for them in the context of remote communities.

Narrative analysis. Before the data were analyzed by thematic analysis, it was important to provide an opportunity for Chinese immigrant women's voices to be heard. The women describe their own situations in some detail so that readers can know who they were before coming to Canada and how they decided to immigrate to a new country. Through narrative research, particularly in a first-person narrative, Chinese immigrant women's experiences before coming to Canada were presented. Through narrative analysis, not only their lives and stories of who they were before coming to Canada are told, but also the factors and reasons for choosing to immigrate to Canada are addressed. The stories include elaborate descriptions of the people involved and any other connected circumstances. Eight participants' stories are told individually:

1st participant: Rat. I studied Business and English in China, but worked more than 10 years at advertising agencies in China. It was really stressful for me to work in China because the advertising field is super competitive and employees must have creative ideas all the time. Normally, I worked overtime every day. The focus of my life was my career. If I did not get

promotion, I could not have the quality life. Also, the relationship between friends and I was really closed, which may cause comparison. Everyone likes to compare life and career with each other; therefore, most time in China I was concentrated on my job and career. Sometimes I felt my family life was neglected because I was too exhausted from my working. However, I enjoyed parties and liked my colleagues. You know, in the advertising company, there are mostly young people. We hung out and had parties every weekend. My life was joyful and colourful. I thought life was parties and playing, and I did not know there was another way to live. Anyway, I decided to come to Canada because I married my husband, who is originally from Mainland China, but had already been living in Canada for a couple years doing his masters degree. I did not have careful consideration about coming overseas because it was unnecessary. I studied information technology in the UK, so being abroad is not difficult for me. We had a hasty marriage and his family wondered about my intention about getting married to him. You know, sometimes girls marry in order to get an opportunity to live in a foreign country. However, we've been married for a long time now. They do not think that way anymore. Being in China I have families and friends, which makes me feel that I am belonging to whole society; being in Canada, life is simple, as well as has high quality, which I really enjoy it. Sometimes I think that even if I go back to China one day, I probably cannot be used to live there anymore.

2nd participant: Ox. I was a tour guide for more than 10 years in Mainland China. I really enjoyed my life in China because I had a flexible job in which I only needed to work seven days per month. Travel agencies assigned tourists to me, but I could choose not to take them; it was my choice. Normally, I only worked seven days a month and I would make two or three thousand dollars, which is considered as a high salary in China. Principal's salary in

the city was one thousand and eight hundred dollars per month, so we earned more than he did. I had lots of friends and we often played Mahjong together. Even now, my friends phone me and ask when I can go back and we can get together again. I loved being with friends in China.

In addition, I have never mentioned to others how sad I was when I got divorced from my son's father. We have been divorced for eight years and he hurts me very much. These eight years I had never ever looked at other men. Dogs bite in every country, and no man deserves my attention. If I did not marry a Canadian, I would be single in China. For me, I think it was better to change the environment where I lived, and start a new life in a different country. I met my husband when he travelled in China. We dated for more than two years. Although I had never visited him in Canada, he went to see me four times in China. We got married in 2009 and I immigrated to Canada.

3rd participant: Tiger. I was a teacher for eight years in China. After that, I moved to a big city where there were no teacher positions needed; therefore, I had to change my job. I started to work as a senior administrator in the international manufacturing industry for 5 or 6 years. I always had good jobs and a strong ability to work. I was the one who has self-motivation and knew what future plans were. Later, I even worked overseas as a sales manager in Singapore. However, even if I liked life in Singapore, I still tried to immigrate to Canada due to the fact that my family was apart. According to the law in Singapore, I owned working permits, meaning my husband and children could only stay in the country for 30 days. I could not tolerate not living with my children.

In 1989, I applied for a scholarship and planned to study in the USA; however, I was not accepted. In order to go abroad, I kept applying for visas, but I never got it. Then, I

thought maybe immigration was the only way to go, so I decided to immigrate to Canada. From 1989 to 2000, I spent 11 years trying to move to a western country. Although I got married, I did not abandon my dream. Finally, in 2000, my husband and I became permanent residents in Canada.

I was always fond of western cultures, so I never gave up any opportunities to live in western countries. I did not know reasons causing me to always want to go abroad, but I think it is because God has guided me to go the route of immigration. I could not receive the Baptism until I left China. In China, there were lots of people applying to be baptized, but religions are more controlled, compared to other countries.

The relationship between my ex-husband was not harmonious. Although we had issues since we were in China, I still hoped he would come to Canada with me. Another reason we could maintain our relationship in China even though we had issues was that I was really busy with my career and I supported him financially. I did not care if he was unemployed or not.

4th participant: Hare. I was an accountant in China. I really enjoyed my life in China because my husband loved me very much and we had quite a stable life. I lived in a rural village and in our neighborhood, we often saw other couples fighting with each other. Believe it or not, we had never fought before coming to Canada. In my hometown, the proverb states "shallow water raises wrinkled mollusc". It is the portrayal of my life. "Wrinkled mollusc" is a metaphor of people, whereas "shallow water is a metaphor of the life and environment where people live. Although we were not rich there, we had a sufficient amount of income to support ourselves. I had a content life.

Later, my husband came to Canada with his family, his mother, younger and older brothers, under the family immigration category. They could not sponsor me to come, so I stayed in China. Also, his father was too old to come over to Canada, so I took care of him with my two daughters. It was really tough to be apart from my husband. We always fought because of rumours and gossip. The long distance caused mutual suspicion and jealousy between us. Plus, his family members and my friends gossiped, which did not help. We argued when we had the chance to talk on the phone. Anyway, it was really hard. After his father died, my two daughters and I also immigrated to Canada. It was 6 years of being apart.

5th participant: Dragon. I was a mechanical engineer for 9 years. My job was less stressful and I lived closely with my family, especially my mother. Also, I and my colleges used to visit the Fragrant hill in which there are a natural pine-cypress forest, hills with maple trees, smoke trees and persimmon trees, as well as landscaped areas with traditional architecture and cultural relics, and go boating in the park. I loved my life in China. The only thing I disliked in China was getting into traffic jams during rush hour. Every day when I went to work, it was a traffic jam. My work started at 8 am, but I had to leave my home before 6:30 am. Normally, I only needed 30 minutes to get there; however, in rush hour, such as in the morning and evening, it took three times longer. Sometimes it even took two or three hours to get there. Commuting between my home and the company was such a pain.

I had never thought of going abroad until my husband was accepted by a university in the UK, so we moved there. After he completed his PhD, we applied to immigrate to Canada because our nine year old son could not speak fluent Chinese. My son was the reason my husband and I chose to come to Canada. It is not just the fact that he cannot speak or write Mandarin as well as other children in China, but also we would not want him to deal with the

pressure of entering schools in Mainland China. You know, it is really competitive there. In order to be accepted by "good" high schools or universities, students have no life. They spend their time studying either days or nights. It is not what my husband and I want our child to live with.

6th participant: Snake. I was a mechanical engineer in China. In that age, graduates were designated jobs in Mainland China, and I was no exception. I worked in the biggest Shougang Technician College in Beijing. There were seven other graduate students, just like me. We hung out together all the time. Others called us eight horses because all of us are horses according to the Chinese Zodiac. We were like brothers and sisters. That was a joyful and happy time in my life. In students' age, friends are truly sincere and friendship is invaluable. Now all of us have left Shougang Technician College and have great careers now. I am probably the one who does not have a good career. For example, one of us is a chief executive officer for a Germany Company. Last time I visited China, I met up with everyone. Anyway, I felt that we have everything in China and I was quite satisfied with my life. However, I wanted to go abroad since lots of my friends or classmates did so. I chose to try a new life here.

7th participant: Horse. Although I learned computer science in China, I worked as a purchasing staff. I started working after completing my bachelor degree. I rented a house with a stranger and we had nothing in common even living under one roof, and I was so bored. Also, I studied at a university in Nanjing, but I worked in Shenzhen; in other words, I had no friends in Shenzhen. I repeated the routine of working and going home day after day and life just went on and on. It was kind of boring. Then, I met my husband who was my employer's friend in China. He came to Canada with his parents when he was a teenager. He

goes back to China every year to see his grandmother. We started dating in 2004 when he was an undergraduate student. We got married after three years when he graduated from university and I moved to Canada.

8th participant: Sheep. I worked for a photography company for 17 years. You know, the work environment in China is based on a lifetime-employment model. A reputation of long work-hours and strong devotion to the company are necessary. The company offered better benefits and true lifetime job security to me. My wages started low, but seniority was rewarded, with promotions based on a combination of seniority and ability. I demonstrated loyalty to the company by not changing companies, so I had a pretty good position there. I enjoyed my life in China because I hung out with friends all the time and there were many different entertainments: go to Karaoke and dance. The entertainment was affordable for me. Also, I could not forget the celebration of Chinese New Year with my family. My family members gathered at each other's homes for visits and shared meals. We turned on the TV even if we did not watch while playing games together. I have a twin sister who is talkative and easy going. Others could tell I was the older one because she's so energetic and vigorous, whereas I was more calm and mature. That was my life in China.

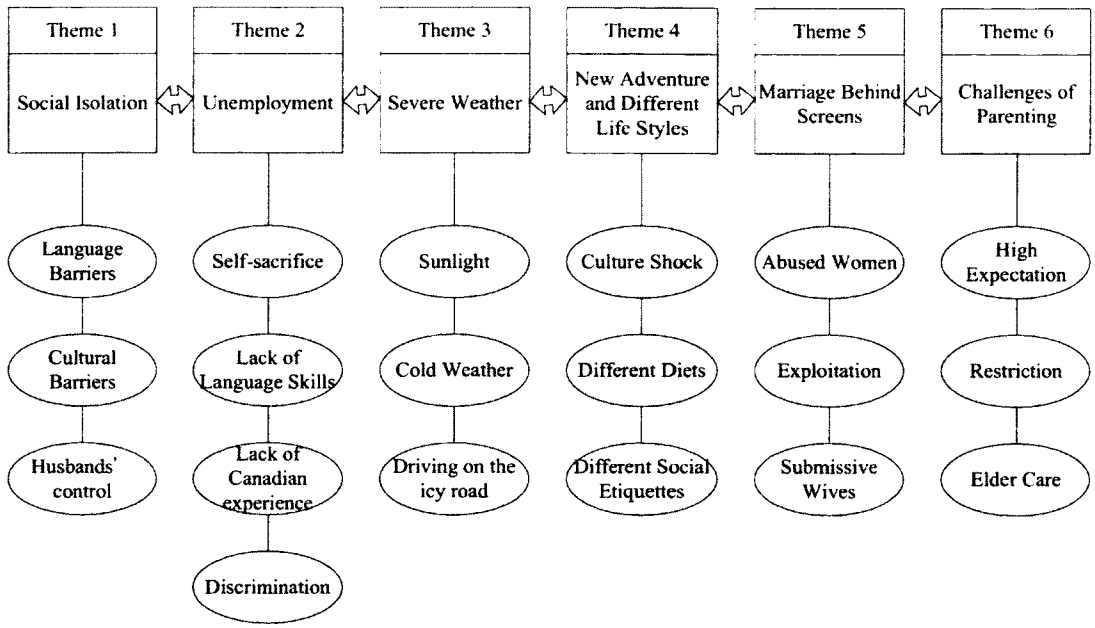
I met my husband through the intercultural marriage agency in Mainland China. One day, my sister watched a commercial of the intercultural marriage agency and she told me about it. She thought I should try to find my partner through intercultural marriage agency because I have a flexible personality and a willingness to travel to different cities. I spent $20,000 RMB for membership in the company, and they matched me up with males who also look for partners from all over the world. Also, they provided translation services. I found my

husband who I fell in love with. He flew halfway around the earth to see me in China and after six months, we met a second time, and got married. This is why I came to Canada.

Thematic analysis. In addition to narrative analysis, I used thematic analysis as another method to analyze data. This was a four step process: transcribing data, coding date, collecting codes into potential themes and sub-themes, and defining and naming the themes and sub-themes. The significance of themes and sub-themes is to capture important things in relation to the overall research question instead of completely depending on quantifiable measures (Braun & Clarke, 2007). I selected examples and themes that were relevant to the research topic and represent the meanings of Chinese immigrant women's lives and experiences in remote communities of northern B.C.. The themes that emerged developed across the participants. The following main themes and additional sub-themes are identified through analysis as showing in Figure 3. The themes and sub-themes are addressed individually in this section.

Figure 3

Themes and Sub-Themes Drawn from Data



Social isolation. Chinese immigrant women are isolated and factors causing their isolation may be complex, such as language barriers, culture barriers/ different interests and hobbies, and husbands' control over them. When it comes to social isolation, the first thought that comes to mind for either the women themselves or the public is language barriers. This research does show that language is the biggest issue when Chinese immigrant women attempt to meet people, make friends, and establish a social life. It is hard to develop further communication due to language barriers. For instance, Ox, Hare, and Sheep stated:

> ...You want to chat with others by using your basic English language, but no one is willing to even talk to you (Ox-Page9-Line36).
>
> I do not try to make new friends because my language is different. Although I can understand others, they do not know what I attempt to express. I cannot make myself understood (Hare-Page11-Line32)...I feel I am better not to talk to others and not to make friends. I try to piece up words in different orders. Anyway, nobody really understands me because of my accent. Sometimes it is difficult to communicate. (Hare-Page11-Line35).
>
> ...because of language barriers...I never had problems using Mandarin. When we talk in Mandarin, we can discuss difference between the feelings of loneliness and solitude. We

> can expand our conversation further. I have lots of happy stories and jokes that I would like to share with others. (Sheep-Page23-Line31).

Chinese immigrant women's isolation is intensified by cultural barriers. Cultural barriers can be exemplified by different interests between people in different countries. One example is that Canadians frequently chat about sports, particularly hockey, which is a part of Canadian culture (Hughes-Fuller, 2005); however, obviously it is not in Chinese culture. When attending social events, they cannot become involved in the conversation. Different interests and habits prevent them from interaction with people from other ethnic groups; hence, culture barriers lead to an unintended low ethnic sociability. Dragon described her experiences of having social conversation:

> Un... One day, there was a meeting and all of the participants, both males and females, watched hockey games. They talked about...this time, the [Stanley] Cup,....who wins the game...who loses the game...(Dragon-Page16-Line32)... Oh, in my mind, [when they were chatting] I was thinking that I have never watched any of the games. I do not know who is going to win [laughing]. How do I guess? They said to me 'well, you guess who is going to win the game this time'. Really, in my mind, I was thinking how I could know it without ever watching a single hockey game before (Dragon-Page16-Line34)...Cultural interests are different! They also enquired about rock bands from Edmonton. Well...the concerts they attended last time... I am not quite interested in these. (Dragon-Page16-Line39).

In addition, jokes are different due to cultural differences. Cultural context provides people with ways of thinking, seeing, and hearing, as well as interpreting the world. Thus, the same words or stories can mean different things to people from different cultures. Another example of cultural barriers is how Chinese immigrant women interpret jokes differently from their Canadian colleagues. When everyone laughs at a joke, they do not. They feel like an outsider at social events, which makes them feel isolated from mainstream society.

> How to say...This may be because we have different cultural backgrounds...sometimes others' jokes make people laugh... I felt that what they are doing...oh...sometimes what they said, I mean I understand all the vocabulary, but....all together, I do not feel it is funny. (Dragon-Page16-Line23).

Sometimes, the husband prevents Chinese immigrant women from having a social life. To be fair, the topic rarely came up in my interviews. However, the significance is not dependent on the number of occurrences; it captures an important element in the research (Braun & Clarke, 2007). Accordingly, a husband's control is a key factor that can result in a woman's social isolation. It plays an important role in the adjustment process of Chinese immigrant women. Under their husband's control, they can be very isolated. They cannot make their own friends since they have no private time.

> He always imagines that he is going to lose me, but actually nothing is happening. He makes up stories about the affair, and thinks it is really happening. He believes that these 'FAKE' stories are true. Afterwards, he tells me how much he loves me and how true his love is (Sheep-Page14-Line13)...(Silence) For example, if I arrive home more than 10 minutes or even only 5 minutes late after school, I am treated like a criminal with monstrous behavior. (Sheep-Page37-Line1).

> [She talked about one of her neighbors, who is a Chinese immigrant woman as well] Her husband did not want her to speak to other Chinese. He is angry, once she talks to other Chinese, let alone talks to Chinese guys. (Ox-Page 24-Line 29).

Unemployment. Employment is the most important issue that Chinese immigrant women are concerned about when they first arrive in Canada. In the research, the women point out that having a job is a top priority because it allows them to survive, live independently, and support their family. Due to lack of English skills and Canadian work experience, it is not easy for them to get a job in the first place. They often work as labourers even if they have a high educational background and sufficient working experience in China. Also, they often choose to forego their careers in order to quickly establish an income. Later, when working, they face discrimination in the working environment.

When Chinese immigrant women first migrate to Canada, finding a job is tough for them due to their language abilities, as well as lack of Canadian experience and social networks. Even if they have a great education background from Mainland China, their

education or work experience in China are not always accepted by Canadian employers. Also, the methods used by Canadian employers to hire employees can be problematic. For newcomers, they barely know people in Canada, and it is difficult to find references in Canada; nonetheless, employers may require references in Canada instead of overseas. It is extremely difficult for newcomers. Normally, no matter what careers the women have in China, they will start working as a labourer.

> I worked as a mechanical engineer and came to Canada with my husband as skilled workers (Snake-Page1-Line2)... I arrived in Canada in May and after more than 10 days, I started working in a Chinese restaurant. I have never done these things in whole my life before coming here. Even my family felt really shocked. They were shocked because I never did chores or cooked at home before...also, at that time, my language skills were poor, so I could only work in the kitchen to cut vegetables and chop meat. I was so frustrated (Snake-Page6-Line18) ...Believe or not, when I just landed in this country, it was extremely difficult to even find a reference since I have never worked here. (Snake-P19-line38).
>
> (Silence) Language creates many difficulties in my life (Ox-Page9-Line31)...For instance, when it comes to looking for jobs, it is still language barriers. I am not lying to you. Because we are not young at all, it is really hard to pick up a language. (Ox-Page9-Line33).
>
> ...I think I have ability and ambitions. Of course, I am willing to contribute myself. However, I do not possess any chance of moving up because my degrees, credentials, and education from China are not recognized. I feel I am nothing and I can do nothing. No matter what ability I have the doors are always closed to me (Tiger-Page7-Line24)... In order to survive, I have to work at a job that others don't want. I must put in more effort than others. (Tiger-Page8-Line31).

In Chinese culture, females are well educated to contribute to the family in different ways. The significant traditional Chinese gender value for married females is self-sacrifice in the interests of their husbands or families, as well as serving as a primary care taker in the household. Although it may not necessarily exist in contemporary Chinese society, I still find that some of the Chinese immigrant women still hold this value even if they are in Canada. When Chinese couples arrive in Canada, women often contribute as financial supporters to the household to provide good opportunities for their husband to pursue careers. Once their

husbands start their careers, they stay home, take care of their children, and work for minimum wage.

> I think if I had a part-time job, he does not need to find a job soon. He won't worry about what is going to happen. He won't need to go out...so he can stay home at ease and look for a job. He also can conduct some research at home and work on his paper. That is my thinking (Dragon-Page8-Line32)...Both of our jobs are not as good as they were when we were in Mainland China, especially mine (Dragon-Page6-Line8)...In fact, every woman wants to have children. In China, if you have children, your family will help you to take care of them or you can hire a babysitter. It is not hard! In a foreign country, I think you only can rely on yourself to do all things. You do everything by yourself. If you want to hire a babysitter, I think it may be too expensive.....well...It is the way it is...After my daughter started going to school, I found a part-time job in XXX (not disclosing the information) (She was a mechanical engineer, but works in the grocery store now). (Dragon-Page6-Line26).

To move into their professional areas, these women pursue studies either in English or their professional fields in Canada. Learning English is a part of their adjustment process.

> [Snake described the most difficult thing in the first year of her Canadian life] ... It is a language problem. Others have no education, but they can speak English. I felt I have degree and certification...in my mind, I felt...Anyway, I have to work and learn English at the same time. It was toilsome and exhausting. First year definitely was hard. Actually, I came here in May, 2007 and started working as a technician/engineer in June, 2008 (Snake-Page6-Line28)... The key point is language. It is a process and you have to bear the process. Basically, I worked half day and learned English at 1:00 in the college. This was first year. There was no choice... Learning English is a part of the process and everyone has to go through in their first year. (Snake-Page6-Line36).

Once Chinese immigrant women are employed, they may face discrimination or an unfriendly working atmosphere. Their experiences of being discriminated against either by clients or their colleagues include many things: ridicule of their accent or language skills, questioning competence for no valid reason, and violation of their rights. However, they are unable to defend themselves due to their lack of English skills.

> "[Dragon described her experience of facing discrimination and racism in Canada]..., especially in [XXX] (where she works). If you speak English with accent, they are not willing to communicate with you. A customer said to me that 'you have an accent and I cannot understand you' (Dragon-Page13-Line2)".

> "[Snake described her experience of facing discrimination and racism in Canada]...In this company there was a local coworker. Later he was fired by the company. I felt that he discriminated against me. He said to me that 'your English is not as good as mine, but you earn more than I do. Who do you think you are? (Snake-Page10-Line30).
>
> [Hare described about her experience of facing discrimination and racism in Canada]... The manager (in her working place) neglected me all the time. She thinks that I am a Chinese and do not know English; hence, I cannot tell the boss what she has done to me. When she worked with me, she ignored me or commanded me (Hare-Page 10-Line7)...she pretended that she cannot hear me...One time, I told her that I am sick and have a fever. I said to the manager ' ... could I go home because I have a fever and feel really sick now'? She said 'you look energetic so you had to be here'. My face was really red... my face was really red...I felt uncomfortable. (Hare-Page10-Line 12).

Severe weather. Severe weather conditions in northern B.C. are a surprise to immigrants, which makes their adaptation to Canada more difficult. The weather in Mainland China is completely different from northern B. C.. Communities receive an average of approximately 76 hours of sunlight per month during the winter, and approximately 300 hours of sunlight per month during the summer (The city of Fort St. John, 2006). Hare described her experience in the winter: "my feet were swollen and red from walking outside, when I got home, my face was also red" (Page14-Line37). Also, Ox repeatedly said "Cold! Cold! Cold! Then, still cold" (Page6-Line13) to response the question that her first impression of northern B.C.. The winters are long and cold and the roads are more dangerous to drive on. It is a challenge for them.

In northern B.C., the days are long and nights are short in the summer. In the parts of China where the participants are from, regardless of summer or winter, the sky gets dark before 8 o'clock. Normally, in south China, such as Canton, evenings begin at 7 o'clock, even in the winter. It takes time for Chinese immigrant women to adjust.

> In July [when I arrived], it was nice weather, like today [interview was conducted on June 8, 2010]. The nights were bright – there was no dark night until 11 o'clock. I asked my mother-in- law that 'Why is it so bright at night?' In Mainland China, sometimes it is dark at 5 o'clock. 'When will it be dark?' My mother-in-law said 'here the sky goes dark at 1 o'clock'. I said well 'then we cannot sleep'. It was so bright. How I could sleep? For

> the first whole week, I could not sleep because it was too bright at night. Even if I closed the windows it was still light. I just could not sleep. I was not used to it. (Hare-Page3-Line6).

Often, when Chinese immigrant women first arrive in the north, they rely on their husband or public buses for transportation since it takes several months or up to a year to get a driver's license. Therefore, when their husband goes to work, they take a bus or walk, even in severe weather, to get around. During long and cold winters, people can barely survive without a vehicle.

> ...Only that it is extremely cold in the winter, then...(Horse-Page5-Line13)... I know it is cold here, but one day I was so sad. The first day I was here, my husband took me to meet the person who was responsible for international students (Horse-Page6-Line15)...Later, I attended the first class. When I was on my way home, I got off the bus at the wrong stop. I did not know I got off at the wrong stop. I did not know where I was. I was in Dr.... that Dr....(Horse-Page6-Line18)... At that time, I felt so sad. I was unfamiliar with people and places. I asked myself why the hell I came to this place. (Horse-Page5-Line26).

Once they obtain their driver's license, another challenge appears: driving on icy roads in expensive vehicles, which they may have never experienced before.

> I hate driving in the snow even though I like the snow. Driving on icy roads drives me crazy. It drove me crazy last winter... I think I have to earn money as soon as possible, and I will change my vehicle to a four wheel drive vehicle (Sheep-Page25-Line17).

New adventures and different lifestyles. Chinese immigrant women strive to be culturally competent and adaptive to different cultural environments. Living in a new country is a completely new adventure. For one thing, their expectations of the city are different from reality due to the nuances and connotations associated with language. The word "city" translates into Chinese as "chén shì", which is a place with a population bigger than in remote communities, where non-agricultural activities take place, as well as normally where industrial, commercial, and administrative centers are (Chinese dictionary, 2011). Therefore, some of the women were surprised that communities are called a "city", but would be considered a rural village in China. Their expectation and reality are different.

> The only thing I have not thought before I came here is that people called this a "city", but it is wide open spaces. If I knew it was a rural village, I wouldn't think it would have wide open spaces. Because people say it is a city...in our country, I lived in a city; however, that city is completely different from this one. Ours is a real city, and this one is a "rural" city (Sheep-Page6-Line7)...If the environment of this place is in China, we call it "rural village" instead of "city". (Sheep-Page6-Line11).
>
> This is a small, tiny...tiny city. It is a micro city, but I feel it is like a blue-collar town. Trucks are everywhere. (Rat-Page3-Line34).

In addition to the size of the city, many of the different conditions in the new environment shocked the women due to differences in expectations. For instance, most of these Chinese immigrant women are from bigger cities before, such as Beijing or Canton, even the size of the airplanes surprised them. Being in a small airplane for the first time, Sheep was concerned about her own safety.

> When I came here, I was shocked by the small airplane. I am saying that....in such a small airplane where there are not many passengers. How small the airplane was. I was wondering how many passengers could be in the plane and if it was safe [laughing]. I feel it is so different between Canada and China. The Canadian territory is huge, yet the airplanes are so tiny? (Sheep-Page5-Line12).

Some of the women stated that adjusting to different diets in Canada is hard, especially in the north. In remote communities of northern B. C., they had to look for ingredients from other cities since Chinese ingredients are usually not available here. Also, Chinese restaurants here do not cater to their tastes. Horse stated this about her experience in the community:

> ... I felt buying stuff is inconvenient here, especially grocery shopping. Sometimes I have to go to Grand Prairie in order to get some foods or ingredients (Horse-Page11-Line15)...then, there are only a few Chinese restaurants. Also, the restaurants do not suit my taste (Horse-Page11-Line23)...It is "Canadian" Chinese food here. In bigger cities, although they have to be concerned about the taste that Canadians like, they still cook to cater to Chinese customers' palates. (Horse-Page11-Line25).

There is also the issue of differing social etiquette. Different ways to get along with friends between Mainland China and Canada affect the women's daily lives. In China, they

often spend more time with friends and have a more social life. Also, Chinese eat together using a "communal dining system"; Canadians eat separate meals as individuals. In the communal system, everybody shares all the food when people hang out with friends. However, in Canada everyone eats their own meal.

> ...It is not shock, but definitely different. For instance, when I just got here, I remembered [XXX] was going to leave her job so her department invited us to go for a dinner together. That's great...eating in the restaurant [laughing]. Later, everyone was only allowed to order one small thing, such as a burger or noodles. This was called "eating together". Although they paid for us, everyone could order only a small amount of food so...I felt...a little shocked. This is not the way that you treat others. In China, you treat others generously – it never happens like this. (Snake-Page9-Line27).

Another example of different social etiquette is the responsibility of bill payment. In Mainland China, splitting the bill is considered crude and barbaric. Being the one that pays it is considered an honor. According to Chinese custom, the person that extends an invitation or the highest ranking person present is the person who pays. The one who doesn't pay often suggests going to another place, and then paying the bill there. Also, whoever invites others, they normally would pay for them. On the contrary, in Canada people do not expect bills paid by others even if they are invited. For Chinese immigrant women, they have to adjust to different behavior or change expectations and act the way that people think is proper in Canada.

> ...Furthermore, Chinese people dine together all the time, which is a Chinese hobby. Look, in China, we get the old classmates or friends and colleagues together and we always have meals/parties. We treat each other all the time. This is a hobby in China. Right? (Snake-Page5-Line19)...One day, he said XXX [participant's name], please, come and join us for supper outside. I said 'I cannot make it due to the fact that I must get my stuff done tonight. By the way, who is going to pay for tonight'? He responded 'of course, go Dutch'! I thought the one who invites us out is supposed to pay. It is different from China! (Snake-Page9-Line37).

Marriage behind screens. Overseas brides, including Chinese immigrant women, may be more vulnerable to violence (Narayan, 1995). For some of the participants who came

overseas to get married, they faced the challenge of not knowing their husbands. The typical example is that the men may hide facts about themselves and act as who they want to be before their marriage. One of the women did not know her husband was an alcoholic and marijuana user until six months after she arrived. Her husband started to behave strangely, emotionally, and psychologically abusing her.

> Nothing was happening, but he imagined many problems and issues. He causes lots of troubles. In the beginning, I did not understand why he did this. Later, I found out he uses marijuana and he could not control himself. I do not tell others he uses marijuana. He had concealed this from me since we met. I did not know. He not only uses marijuana, but also drinks. (Sheep-Page14-Line3)... He turns on music all night long. That music was so loud. 'Boo-Boo-Boo'. I could not sleep and I had to go to work the next day (Sheep-Page14-Line36) ...I gave him my true heart and came overseas. Why do I have to tolerate him and his lies? (Sheep-Page38-Line15).

The exploitation and inequality stemming from dependence is obvious. Chinese immigrant women rely on their husbands completely when first arriving in Canada. However, their husbands may employ it as a way to control them. If their demands are not met, an abusive husband may "punish" them. For instance, one of the participants lacking English skills signed a contract for buying her vehicle, while at the same time, without knowing, she signed a contract stating that her husband could sell the vehicle without her agreement. Later, when they had issues, her husband took advantage of this contract. Chinese immigrant women are vulnerable to exploitation in a new country.

> ...After I started working, he asked me to pay 500 dollars every month to buy the vehicle, which he gave me as a present early (Sheep-Page37-Line33)...At that time, he gave me the contracts, one of which entitled him to change vehicle owner at anytime (Sheep-Page37-Line36)... He asked me to sign my name there. Because I did not know English and just immigrated here...If I do not trust my own husband, who can I trust? (Sheep-Page38-Line1)...When he made up these fake stories for no reason [Her husband imagined that she will leave him or she has an affair], he changed the name of vehicle's owner (Sheep-Page38-Line4)...He became the owner of the vehicle without notifying me. (Sheep-Page38-Line7).
>
> [Ox talked about one of her neighbors who is a Chinese immigrant woman as well] I was there and her husband told my husband that 'if my wife does not listen to me, I will buy a

> returning ticket and set her back to China' (Ox-Page25-Line1)"...Can you believe that? He told my husband! Who he thinks he is (Ox-Page25-Line4)...he even told my husband to treat me like that. (Ox-Page25-Line6).

Many studies (Belleau, 2003; Constable, 2003; Narayan, 1995) have indicated that many of the males who seek women overseas are looking for docile and submissive girls for wives they can control. The assumption is proven positive in my research. The experience of the participants in my study illustrates that males who look for foreign wives expect their wives play multiple roles.

> Why do I have to be controlled by him? You are not sincere and the only thing you have done is say you love me. What did you do to love me? (Sheep-Page38-Line16)...he copied all of my cards and kept duplicates...social insurance cards, bank cards...cards, cards...(Sheep-Page38-Line22)...In my life, my husband is looking for someone who is submissive to him. He only allows me to do what he wants me to do. He is not looking for a wife. He is looking for a housemaid/babysitter (Sheep-Page36-Line32)...He does not want one who plays a role as a wife. He wants a housemaid/babysitter. You have to do everything and you have to listen to him. He wants to control me! I really feel in this way. (Sheep-Page36-Line36).
>
> [Ox talked about one of her neighbors who is a Chinese immigrant woman as well] The neighbor's husband told my husband that 'I spent money to buy my wife, so she has to listen to me everything' (Ox-Page 24-Line32)... When both of us there [Ox and Ox's husband] the neighbor's husband said that 'I am their bosses, and they [they refer to Chinese immigrant women/brides] SHUOULD follow what I want them to do. My neighbor told me she feels wronged. (Ox-Page24-Line38).

Challenges of parenting. The difference in parenting values between Canadian and Chinese cultures created adjustment challenges, which came up for research participants. I do not intend to create an image of a stereotypical Chinese culture, and I acknowledge that there may be different methods of parenting depending on each family. Undeniably, Chinese parents, especially Chinese mothers, have high expectations for their children even if they are in a new culture. One Chinese proverb states that "parents expect their sons will turn out a dragon and their daughters will grow up into a phoenix". It means parents expect their children to be the most talented and intelligent people in the world. The women struggle with

parenting values they have been taught from their own culture because the attitudes are much more relaxed in Canada. They must adjust to the new culture which respects their children's own desires.

> ...When having kids, we hope children will be outstanding people. In China, even now, the parents with younger generations still hope their kids are more successful than others. Of course, kids have to be remarkable in the future. They have to earn lots of money; they have to become the head of a company. However, I feel that in Canada, people kind of let children develop freely and choose their own way (Dragon- Page 11-Line 12)...For my son, in the beginning, I was like other Chinese parents who believed he should be a doctor or a lawyer because those are good careers. However, my son does not like these careers. Consequently, he still chose what he likes and what he wants. (Dragon-P10-Line 6).

Another example of different methods of parenting is restriction. In Mainland China, many Chinese mothers believe that they know what is best for their children and therefore sometimes override their children's own desires and preferences. Some participants mentioned that they wouldn't allow their children to have sleepovers because they think it is dangerous to stay overnight at a friend's or classmate's house. This is not only a restriction on children, but also the different cultures or attitudes towards the same thing. For instance, the incident of sleepovers may not be a proper thing to do in China, but it is normal in Canada.

> ...I place restrictions on kids. I do not allow them to have a sleepover...This is Chinese culture. I think it probably is a cultural difference between Canada and China. My kids often say they want to have a sleepover. I told them 'you cannot to do so. Mon is not used to the culture yet'...because growing in Mainland China, I never had a sleepover experience. I do not know what it's like...(Tiger-Page15-Line23).

For Chinese immigrant women, the adjustment process is continuous even if they have been in Canada for a decade. Family values are challenged in the new culture, which causes tension among different generations. Traditional Chinese families are child-centered rather than couple-centered (Anqi, X., et. al., 2007). Possible reasons are unclear, but it may be a combination of Confucian filial piety and the fact that their parents have sacrificed and done

so much for children (Chua, 2011). Chinese immigrant women expect that elders should be cared for by their children, and that family unity and togetherness will continue in their old age.

> ...Sometimes I ask our kids, especially my youngest daughter who was born in Canada, whether you will raise or take care of me when I am too old to live alone. She said 'oh...well, when the time comes, I have my own family and I have to take care of my own children (Dragon-Page11-Line12)...My husband said when we retire, we will move back to Mainland China and live in the countryside. I said 'NO! We cannot. We still have to live with our children (Dragon-P10-Line23)...In Mainland China many elders expect their children will take care of them later in life. (Dragon-P11-Line12).

Light of hope. Living in remote settings may intensify difficulties of Chinese immigrant women's adjustment process, but on the other hand, there are certain benefits due to the lower cost of transportation, more opportunities for employment, and the friendly environment. For instance, it is easy to drive around town since it is small. They save gas and time commuting to work every day. Also, traffic jams are not bad as they are in bigger cities, such as Vancouver. Dragon stated " traffic jams barely happen in her community (Page2-Line15)...Oh (laughing)...My husband does not like Vancouver. Sometimes traffic jams occur in a rush hour. (Sigh) he said we won't come here next time (Page2-Line17)".

Unemployment is also less common compared to bigger cities. In the north, Chinese immigrant women have more job opportunities. All of the participants have either jobs or careers now even for these who self identified their English as low or media levels. One of the women mentioned that she has her teacher's license in Vancouver, where it is more competitive to get a job, but eventually she got her current teaching job in northern B. C..

Generally speaking, Chinese immigrant women feel that people are friendly in the north, which helps them find a sense of belonging in some ways.

> ...I see many friendly faces in the community: when getting astray, I ask others; when talking to others, I can feel their friendly attitude towards me through their body

> languages; they display that you are equal, right? We are friendly!...Something like this. (Tiger-Page5-Line1).
>
> ...In China, I have never met these nice people. After working, it was snowing. They [she means strangers in the street] whoever passed by me asked if I need a ride. They said 'it is cold and too hard to walk. Do you need a ride'? (Hare-Page4-Line8).

Summary

There are six main themes drawn from the data. Chinese immigrant women in remote settings experience social isolation, unemployment, severe weather, a different lifestyle, marriages behind screens, and challenges of parenting. Beyond these challenges, they:

- may be socially isolated due to language barriers, cultural barriers, or a controlling husband
- are employed to sacrifice themselves to their families
- lack language skills and Canadian experience
- endure discrimination
- deal with severe weather, such as overexposure to sunlight, cold weather, and poor road conditions
- must get used to a different lifestyle
- may be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by their husbands
- may be challenged about their parenting in the new country.

However, compared to a bigger city, living in a remote setting will not necessarily exacerbate difficulties in their adjustment process. Chinese immigrant women may have a better quality life by not facing traffic jams, unemployment, and the unfriendly environment.

Chapter Six: Discussion, Implications and Recommendations, and Limitations

The themes and sub-themes are discussed separately in the finding section, but they are interdependent, stemming from the complex nature of Chinese immigrant women's situations in remote settings. For instance, language barriers can intensify Chinese immigrant women's social isolation, cause unemployment, and exacerbate violent circumstances. Also, distinct cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies affect Chinese immigrant women's lives in various ways: they may be vulnerable to violence because of the stigma attached to divorce, and their isolation is intensified by cultural barriers. In this section, I will discuss the findings, their implications and recommendations, and address limitations of the research.

Discussion

From the data, six themes and 19 sub-themes relevant to the topic emerged. These not only represent the meaning of Chinese immigrant women's lives and experiences in remote communities of northern B.C., but also show the difficulties and issues that Chinese immigrant women confront when adjusting to remote communities of northern B.C.. Some challenges occur regardless of the setting (urban or rural), whereas others happen or are exacerbated in remote communities. This section will include comparisons of findings and literature on not only Chinese immigrant women issues in the adjustment process, but also their social support networks.

Difficulties and issues. Moving to a new country, Chinese immigrant women face different challenges in the adjustment process, such as language barriers, different cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies, isolation, working in manual labour jobs, different parenting skills, unique conditions in remote settings, and severe weather. However, by living in

remote communities of northern B.C., the women may have higher quality life due to more employment opportunities and a less crowded environment.

Language barriers. Lack of English is seen as one of most significant barriers (e.g., Kelaher et al, 2001; Narayan, 1995) in my participants' adjustment process. It affects their lives in different ways, such as isolation and an unintended low ethnic sociability due to the fact that they cannot communicate effectively; unemployment due to obstacles in transferring their professional accreditation and skills in Canada; and difficulties in accessing services and information (Hoang, 2008). Furthermore, the women being socially isolated are more vulnerable to abuse and violence and retreat from resources and services, especially in remote settings where most agencies or services do not provide services in multiple languages. Languages broadly affect Chinese immigrant women's lives.

Cultural barriers and isolation. Kelaher, Potts, and Manderson (2001) indicate that immigrant women's confidence and ability to interact in different contexts are affected by their ambiguity around appropriate behaviour. For instance, Chinese immigrant women face different social etiquettes- is it normal to pay for others' bills after eating together; is it allowed to share a meal with others when hanging out with friends? The sociability of Canadians is not always perceived as warm and friendly from Chinese immigrant women. Their interests, hobbies, and social etiquette are different, which contributes to a cultural barrier and the feeling of loneliness and social isolation.

Feelings of isolation and depression are intensified in remote communities of northern B.C.. Most participants mentioned that they enjoyed their social and family life before coming to Canada, but their quality of life is now lower due to language and cultural barriers. Furthermore, in remote settings, women do not have the support of the big network of friends

and family as in bigger cities or in Mainland China. Depression can be associated with missing family and friends, as may be the case, for example, with people who are used to living and working in more populated areas (Hunter, 2006).

Working in manual labour jobs. Like other immigrant women (Harlan, & Berheide, 1994; Philippine Women Centre of B.C., 2000), Chinese immigrant women may be segregated to lower-paying jobs in spite of being highly educated and skilled. In this research, their unemployment is intensified by their lack of language skills and other factors, such as self-sacrifice, lack of Canadian experience, and discrimination in certain degrees. Many arrive in Canada with skills and accreditation from Mainland China, but realize that they are not recognized here. Again, the language difficulties do not help and restrict their opportunities (Harlan & Berheide, 1994). Because of the lack of appropriate language training available in remote settings, Chinese immigrant women's insufficient command of English specific to their professions, such as engineering and accounting, results in another barrier to employment (Man, 2004). Chinese immigrant women who are willing to receive job training or language training have extremely limited choices in a small city; hence, highly educated immigrants working as labourers is a common occurrence.

Vulnerable to violence. As findings in the research indicate, when it comes to Chinese immigrant women's marriages, especially those who immigrated through transnational marriage, they confront the challenge of not knowing their husbands, exploitation and inequality, and expectation of being a submissive wife; moreover, remote settings exacerbate their situations. Cross-cultural marriage can result in unrealistic expectations on both sides, meaning severe incompatibility at best, and outright abuse at worst. In remote settings, there are no support services in some regions with small populations of immigrants (Cottrell, 2008)

and no social services in multiple languages, so women who have no English skills cannot even ask for assistance. Often they may not even know that help is available. Also, because of the cultural value that divorce is a shame and the stigma of international marriage that women marrying Canadians exploit marriage as a method of immigration to Canada, the women isolate themselves even from the Chinese community. As a result, they are at a greater risk for abuse because of their status in the marriage.

Challenges of parenting. Parenting is shown in the research to be a challenge due to different cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies. Chinese immigrant women's parenting skills and ideologies are challenged in the foreign context. As mentioned earlier, every family has their unique method of parenting and a stereotypical view of Chinese culture should be avoided. However, the research shows that Chinese immigrant women have high expectations of their children, possess parental authority, and ask for mutual obligations. Irreconcilable conflicts often occur between women's parenting values from their own culture and new values that their children have learned in Canada.

Chinese immigrant women have high expectations of their children and tend to put many restrictions on them. In Chinese culture, parents wield greater authority and are highly involved in decision making and caring for children throughout their lives. Also, Chinese place a strong emphasis on the importance of education; ensuring children are properly schooled is regarded as the primary responsibility of Asian parents (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Children are encouraged to gain mastery over any discipline that they seek to pursue and thus face a lot of pressure to excel. The balance between immigrant women's expectations and respecting children's own desires is a significant challenge. Although Chinese immigrant mothers often have specific expectations and desires for their children, they also are likely to

explain the reasons behind their requests and expectations, and allow their children to "make up their own minds" (Gorman, 1988, p.78). Children are encouraged to make their own decisions, on the condition that they consider the welfare and wishes of family members (Chao, 1995). Parenting values between Canadian and Chinese cultures are distinct. However, the participants endeavoured to adjust their parenting instead of trying to have absolute control in a foreign context.

Next, the adjustment process of learning new cultures is continuous. Asian parenting beliefs are shaped by a cultural emphasis on interdependence among family members (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Chinese mothers hold the primary responsibility for their children's upbringing and are expected to provide immense devotion and sacrifice (Chao, 1994). Under the circumstances, children have obligations towards the family and are expected to respect and care for their parents. The research shows that even in the foreign context, Chinese immigrant women may still expect that elders should be cared for by their children, or that at least family unity and togetherness will carry on in their old age. However, in reality, settling into a new society can also alter the traditional roles between parents and children, particularly in caring for elderly immigrant parents. These differences may cause disagreements between Chinese immigrant women and their children.

***Unique conditions in northern B.C.*.** Unique conditions, such as rural environments, small size of airplanes, and the lack of Chinese ingredients and "authentic" Chinese food in remote communities result in culture shock for Chinese immigrant women. In the research, many Chinese immigrant women have expectations of a beautiful and developed Canada. Northern communities do not match up to their expectations. This is because northern communities are very small – especially relative to cities in China where a "small" city can

still have a population of a million people – but also partially due to different language connotations between English and Chinese. Also, the size of the small airplanes surprised them and caused some concerns about their safety. Finally, they had to change their diets due to the fact that Chinese ingredients are simply not available in remote communities of northern B.C..

Severe weather may be a shock, making Chinese immigrant women's adaptation to Canada more difficult. The winters are long and cold, and the roads are dangerous to drive on. The hours of sunlight during the winter and summer are extremely short or long, which affects not only immigrants but also local residents. Months of very short days and long nights during the winter can result in depression (Hunter, 2006). Even long days and short nights during the summer can affect their quality of sleep and regular life schedule, especially for newly arrived Chinese immigrant women. Heavy snowfall, extreme temperatures, and driving on icy roads and highways is a challenge for those who are not used to it – even more for these who had never seen snowing before coming to Canada. In the research of "Almost fond of the damned town: Women's concepts of community in Mackenzie, British Columbia", Worfolk (2002) indicates that even for local residents, being cut off from the main highway due to heavy snowfall may lead to anxiety. These conditions caused by severe weather exacerbate difficulties in adjustment to life in Canada.

Strengths of living in remote communities of northern B.C.. Living in remote communities of northern B.C. is not completely negative for Chinese immigrant women. For one thing, unemployment is less common in remote communities of northern B.C.. In this research, some of the findings are in agreement with other studies, in that non-English speaking immigrants work at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy and earn only

subsistence wages (Ng & Gupta, 1980). Despite having professional status in their home countries of China and South Asia, they often still work as labourers (Ng, Man, Shan, & Liu, 2006). However, according to the literature review, the most northern and remote regions in Canada have limited job opportunities and very limited job growth (Canada's Rural Partnership, 2009), and most job opportunities in remote communities are limited to resource-based industries (e.g., mining and forestry), in which men are dominant (Burns, 2007). Interestingly, these statements are inconsistent with the outcome of the research. Chinese immigrant women seem to have more job opportunities compared to those living in major Canadian cities. All the participants, even those who identified themselves as having low or medium English skills, were employed. Also, some Chinese immigrant women who were non-English speakers have jobs, and some participants even discovered that they could not find a job in a bigger city, but were hired in the north. There are some possible explanations for this. First of all, an employer survey conducted by Ipsos Reid Public Affairs confirmed that resource communities such as Fort St. John are currently experiencing a labour shortage (Fort St. John Employment Information Source, 2007). Also, one of the major industry sectors in this area is oil and gas (Fort St. John Employment Information Source, 2007), where workers earn relatively high salaries compared to other cities and industries. The service industry pays less, so locals tend to avoid those jobs and is less competitive. General labour work generally pays more than other places (Fort St. John Employment Information Source, 2007) and it may reduce immigrant women's financial stress. These factors may help Chinese immigrant women adjust.

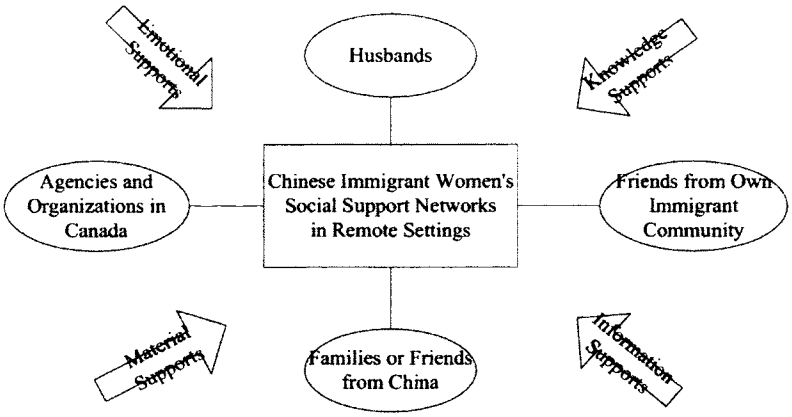
Additionally, the women may feel having a higher quality of life in remote settings due to the fact that traffic jams rarely happen and locals welcome them in some ways. Many

participants revealed that people are unhurried, there are no crowds and the lifestyle is set at a calm pace, even in rush hours, traffic blockage hardly occurs. Friendly locals help them acclimatize to new surroundings. This helps them to find a sense of belonging and adjust to a new community.

The women's social support networks in remote settings. Chinese immigrant women's social support networks are one of the most important factors in adjusting to the new country. Although they confront challenges in remote communities, their social support networks help them cope with difficulties or issues. As mentioned earlier, social support networks refer to social relationships surrounding Chinese immigrant women that help them adjust. The core support is from their husbands, friends from the Chinese immigrant community, their own families or friends from Mainland China, and agencies and organizations in Canada. The support appears in many forms, including emotional support, knowledge and information, and material resources. The following figure illustrates Chinese immigrant women's social support networks in remote settings:

Figure 4

Chinese Immigrant Women's Social Support Networks in Remote Setting



Chinese immigrant women's husbands. The research demonstrates that Chinese immigrant women's husbands are the most significant component in their social support networks. For the Chinese immigrant women who came overseas with their husbands or to reunite with their husbands in particular, and those who married Chinese-Canadians, their husband is the person with whom they go through everything together, and their support is all inclusive.

> Definitely it is him [her husband, who is willing to listen to her difficulties] because he can understand my feeling of being here. (Rat-Page18-Line11).
>
> ...I talk with my husband [when confronting difficulties]. I have no one to talk to. I do not like to talk to others about our private stuff. Sometimes you cannot tell others about your family stuff and others won't understand it. (Hare-Page16-Line13).
>
> We did not tell others [when confronting difficulties her husband]. We only discuss things with each other. (Dragon-Page18-Line15).
>
> I definitely talk to my husband [when confronting difficulties]. (Horse-Page17-Line8).

On the other hand, Chinese immigrant women married to Canadians tend not to mention their husbands when being asked about their social support networks. In the research, I did not investigate this further, but one possible reason may be the language barrier. It may

be hard to communicate with their husbands in daily life, let alone disclose their emotions and explain their difficulties.

> [When the research asked 'who do you or would you like to talk to when facing a difficulty] I cannot find any one...No one! No one! No one! No one I would like to talk to (Ox-P17-Line 31)... I feel no one will listen to my problems. I only can solve them on my own. (Ox-Page18-Line5).

Chinese immigrant women's families from Mainland China. Chinese immigrant women get their emotional support from their own family members in Mainland China, such as parents and siblings. With the exception of their husbands, they rely on their family in Mainland China the most. Most of them phone their families several times a week. Also, Internet tools such as Skype make the world smaller and connect the women to their families easily, as if they were right next to each other. They can talk anytime and get emotional support, which reduces their loneliness and isolation.

> Yes! Yes! Because the Internet is really convenient, I phone my family on the weekend! I call my family every week and talk to them. I feel...eh...when talking to them, time flies quickly [laughing]! Every time I call, I spend at least 2 hours talking to them and I feel I am really close to them. Like I am in China, and the idea that I am alone abroad no longer exists. I mentally feel fine. (1-P15-25).

Their husbands' attitude towards them talking to their family plays an important role and affects the function of the women's social support networks. Sometimes their husband prevents them from contacting their own families. One of participants mentioned that her husband did not forbid her phoning her family in Mainland China, but insisted that she communicate with her Chinese families only in English. Since none of her family members speak English, this essentially ended all communication. Hence, her social support was cut off.

> He did not support me [to contact my families] if I speak Mandarin to my families (Sheep-Page 34-Line20)... So If I speak to my family in English, they are unable to understand (Sheep-Page 34-Line22)... I feel it is contradictory between his encouragement and discouragement of contacting my own family in China. If my family

> knew English, I would talk to them using my poor English. However, they do not, and there is no point (Sheep-Page 34-Line25)...He [her husband] said since I live in a Canadian husband's house, I should only speak English in this house. (Sheep-Page34-Line30).

Friends from the Chinese community. The rest of the immigrant community also provides emotional support, information, and social companionship. Often this is provided by other Chinese immigrant women who may have had similar experiences.

> ...For instance, before I apply for some things, I ask my friends and they will share information with me. They will tell me how to make it easier, where to go, and where to apply. (1-P18-23).
>
> ...recently, XXX [another Chinese immigrant] helps me a lot. I am looking for a house and she drives around with me and accompanies me when I look at houses. Sometime she gives me advice, and sometimes she calms me down when I am too crazy about houses. She makes me consider things deliberately and offers advice from different perspectives. (Horse-Page17-Line16).

Agencies and organizations in Canada. People from immigration services agencies or other government organizations provide not only information but also emotional support in order to help them either adjust to a new country or resolve issues they may encounter. The most common services they receive when newly arrived are related to settlement issues, such as housing. Sheep stated her experiences that "XXX [immigration agencies] she helped me to find a job and rent a house. They will provide all kinds of information to me, so I feel that the Canadian social welfare system is complete, compared to China (Page29-Line10)".

Social and welfare services help Chinese immigrant women when they are isolated. For example, divorce is still considered a social stigma that has a negative impact on one's reputation and on social stability in Chinese society (Anqi, X, 2007), so if they have marriage issues, they worry about others' judgmental attitudes and rumours within their own communities, especially in northern B.C. where the immigrant population is relatively small and people know each other. Therefore, when Chinese immigrant women confront abuse or

marriage issues in a new country, they often try to keep them hidden from friends in the Chinese immigrant community as well as their families in China. Under the circumstances, they are marooned in their social support networks. Therefore, service providers or social workers from outside the Chinese immigrant community are the most favourable support group. Also, the supports may vary, such as emotional support and knowledge, based on different needs.

> They [service providers] hope that I will be in good condition and heal from my trauma [she was abused by her husband and joined the women's violence program]. They speak from deep within the heart. (Sheep-Page29-Line31).
>
> ...Like XXX [a service provider], she helped me as a legal aid (Sheep-Page30-Line14)...She [another service provider], is a social worker. If court appearance is required, they will attend with me, and also try to help me find a Chinese translator. They will definitely provide me information related to my situation. They gave me information about alcoholism and family violence, and the phone number of Chinese services in Vancouver. (Sheep-Page30-Line17).

Church may be another resource for the women. One of the participants, Tiger, stated when struggling with her marriage, the minister of the church was the only one she consulted with: "[When confronting marriage issues] I talked to the minister. As a church minister, of course, he encouraged me to maintain my marriage. However, eventually I failed it. Then I took my children with me and left my marriage (Page 17-Line 15)".

In remote settings where the Chinese immigrant population is smaller, settlement services provide a place where immigrants can have a social life and make connections with other immigrants. It forms a solid and informal social support group. Snake said that "the advantage of participating in the English classes and activities is that immigrants can meet other newcomers. It turns into newcomer and immigrant social events and we can make new friends (Page23-Line23)".

Implications and Recommendations

In order to help Chinese immigrant women adjust to the new country, and live well in remote communities of northern B. C., there are implications and recommendations for professional practice and decision making: settlement services and educations should be provided; their social support networks should be well developed; and cultural competence should be included in social work education. I will further address these in the following section.

Settlement services and educations. Upon arrival in Canada, settlement services are indispensable to Chinese immigrant women. There are several key components for settlements services: they provide 1) multiple languages services; 2) information about other community services, schools, and health care, 3) information about employment, including showing them surrounding environments and connecting between employers and immigrants; 4) education about the Canadian social welfare system and women's rights; and 5) English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Language is the barrier that prevents immigrant women from accessing services and information, so resources in multiple languages are the most important key for settlement services. The participants arrived with no knowledge of settlement services. In the words of one participant: "Assistance? I do not know (Hare-Page18-Line21)...How to say? I did not know about XXX [immigration agency] until my son was born [three years after moving to the north] (Hare-Page18-Line29)".

In remote communities of northern B. C., settlement services are not available in other languages except Spanish and Chinese. Due to lack of language skills, they could not read English newspapers, understand English media or even ask for assistance; hence, although

settlement agencies try to promote and deliver their programs, the women did not know settlement services were available to them due to their lack of English. Organizations should advertise their services more broadly in immigrant communities (Cottrell, 2008), especially in multiple languages.

The language barrier also creates difficulties for Chinese immigrant women when it comes to their children's education. For instance, they have a hard time registering their children in schools or communicating with teachers regarding their children's needs. Therefore, SWIS (Settlement Workers in Schools) workers with multiple language skills are extremely valuable.

> I tried to look for schools for my daughters in the first year of being in the north. My English skills were not good and I did not know how to communicate with them (Hare-Page19-Line8)...He [a Caucasian who she met in the street who she became friends with and helped her a lot, including communicating with the school] asked the school to help my children more. My children just landed here and they could not speak fluent English. He helped me convey my children's needs and how the school could assist them. He might have said too much. Later he and the principal are quarreled. (Hare-Page19-Line8).

Regarding employment information, settlement services not only provide job postings and training information, they also bridge/connect between Chinese immigrant women and employers. As a result of being unfamiliar with local processes, if settlement services only provide newcomers with job opportunities or training without actually showing them how to do things, it does not help enough. If service providers can show them once or twice where companies are located and how interviews are structured, it would relieve their anxiety and steer them towards success.

> ...I recall the guy who helped immigrants with job-hunting. I am not quite sure if he was from Vancouver or Prince George. He told us he actually takes immigrants to their job interviews. XXX [an immigrant services provider in the north] literally took me and my husband to different companies. Immigrants are not like residents here who know everything about this town. Also, immigrants have language problems. Accordingly, when it comes to job hunting, they need a connection between employers and employees.

> Service providers could be a bridge person instead of sending emails of listing job postings. I may know more job postings than they do! (Snake-Page19-Line18).

Immigrating to Canada, Chinese immigrant women face a completely different social welfare system from that in China and the lack of knowledge may leave them unaware of their rights. Also, living in remote communities of northern B. C. where the immigrant communities are not as large as these in big cities, such as Vancouver, it is difficult to gain social welfare information by word of mouth in their own immigrant communities. Since they are not aware of what they are missing, they do not know they can seek assistance when they confront challenges. For instance, when unemployed, they do not realize they can apply for Employment Insurance (EI)[1] from the government.

Moreover, immigrants live in difficult situations due to lack of knowledge of the Canadian social welfare system. Chinese immigrants would benefit if policy makers made reforms such that all immigrants were under obligation to learn about the Canadian social welfare system, especially if the information was provided in different languages.

> No! I have never received any support. I have not received any support from social welfare systems. No! No! No! I have to find everything on my own through the Internet (Dragon-Page19-Line38)... No one offered us any information. If you don't know it, then you'll never know it (Dragon-Page20-Line33)... When financial difficulties happened, we did not know who we should ask for help. Really, I thought there was no one to assist us (Dragon-Page20-Line27)... Actually, we were a low-income family. Plus, I was pregnant. We were supposed to get 32 dollars from government and other subsidies, but we knew nothing. I found out after I gave a birth to my daughter. (Dragon-Page21-Line1).

In addition to the Canadian social welfare system, Chinese immigrant women should learn about women's rights in Canada. Without having English skills and knowing their rights in a new country, Chinese immigrant women can be easily taken advantage of or exploited by their husbands. Their husbands or even Canadian friends may tell them that men

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[1] EI provides temporary financial assistance to unemployed Canadians who have lost their job through no fault of their own while they look for other work or upgrade their skills.

are superior, which violates gender equality. They should be educated about their rights in Canada, and they should not be forced to do things they are not willing to do.

> Eh, I thought men were superior to women here. Women have to stay home, do chores, clean houses, and cook. They can choose either to cook or not, but they have to do chores. Even if my Canadian female friends who do not earn lots of money have to handle housework well. You have to cook and you have to clean the house, all of which are what wives should do. (Sheep-Page8-Line2).

It is obvious by now that poor English affects immigrant women's lives on a broad scale. English language education is an extremely important core component of services for Chinese immigrant women.

Development of Chinese immigrant social support networks. In terms of Chinese immigrant women's social support networks, according to the findings, key components for assisting women in developing social supports are providing places where they can meet each other, share similar experiences, and expand their social networks. Cultural activities and special events and festivals create a place where immigrant women can meet friends and have a sense of belonging. During ethnic holidays, people sometimes feel even more lonely and homesick than usual since they may have no friends or relatives in Canada with whom they can celebrate. If multicultural agencies can create a special event to celebrate their significant traditional holidays, such as Chinese New Year, people who come from the same background can celebrate together, reducing loneliness and isolation, and also creating a place for them to develop social networks. Better yet, having a cultural centre for newcomers allows these things to happen in a centralized location (Cottrell, 2008).

Social work professionals. I would like to address professional skills, such as self-awareness, having cross-cultural knowledge and skills, and supporting a diverse workforce and language diversity. Firstly, social workers should develop an understanding of our own personal and cultural values and beliefs. Sometimes within a culture we lack

awareness; we do not realize our culture, behaviour, social norms, and the world we live in. For example, fish never see water. We assume a universality of needs and services for clients; this is called cultural blindness (Cross et al, 1989). Professionals may be "culturally blind" without being aware of it (Kalyanpur, 1998). It is dangerous, especially when it comes to servicing immigrant women who come from different cultural backgrounds. To fully appreciate cultural differences, social workers must recognize the influence of our own culture on how others' think and act. We have to reflect on what clients need instead of what we think they need. Self-awareness helps in understanding the process of cultural identity formation and prevents stereotyping. As one develops diversity within one's own group, one can be more open to the diversity within other groups (NASW, 2001).

Social workers' continuous education should include cross-cultural knowledge and skill training. We should possess and continue to develop specialized knowledge about specific providers and client groups that we work with (NASW, 2001). For instance, immigrant women leaving a violent husband often mean leaving their community in some ways. In the article, "Providing Service to Immigrant Women in Atlantic Canada", people did not appreciate how big an achievement it is for immigrant women to face their fears associated with going against beliefs and cultures (Cottrell, 2008). Productive cross cultural interventions are even more likely when mainstream workers make a conscious effort to understand the meaning of a client's behaviour within his/her cultural context. Also, whether the incidents of violence are culturally-based or not, immigrant women appreciate that service providers are aware that they are from different countries (Cottrell, 2008). Therefore, social workers need the critical skills of asking the right questions, being comfortable with and discussing cultural differences, and asking clients about what works for them and what is

comfortable for them (NASW, 2001). Fair is not equal; equal treatments are not always fair. We should acknowledge these and provide personalized services based on their needs.

Diverse workforce and language diversity are indispensable for the social work professionals. The findings show that language barriers and cultural barriers are the most significant factors affecting immigrant women's lives, including resulting in difficulties in accessing services. Other research (e.g., Barrera, 1978; Cross et. al, 1989) has suggested that linguistic and cultural barriers are best overcome through multicultural staff who speak more than one language. Also, social workers with bilingual and bicultural abilities improve the understanding of clients who lack of English proficiency. The social workers' work is more effective (Engstrom & Min, 2004). Supporting and advocating for recruitment, admissions and hiring, and retention efforts in social work programs and agencies should be carried out to ensure diversity within the social work profession. Furthermore, language issues in field placements should be considered in the context of the entire social work curriculum, which must prepare students to work with interpreters and to identify other language and cultural issues and barriers to effectively provide services (Engstrom, Gamble, & Min, 2009).

Limitations

Limitations, including generalizations and potential stereotypes, are inevitable in a researcher's agenda. Being an insider has the double-edged sword of advantages and disadvantages.

One of the obvious limitations of this research is that a sample of eight Chinese immigrant women cannot be generalized to all Chinese immigrant women in remote communities. Although Kvale and Brinkman (2009) state that "the qualitative research interview is not scientific, quantitative, objective, scientific hypothesis testing, a scientific

method, trustworthy, reliable, intersubjective, valid, and generalizable" (p. 168), in-depth interviews can be valid (Seidman, 2006) and produce credible information.

Moreover, the culture of China is one of the world's oldest and most complex (Fan, 2000). The area in which the culture is dominant covers a large geographical region in eastern Asia with customs and traditions varying greatly between towns, cities, and provinces. Therefore, when it comes to Chinese immigrant women, differences exist, even if they are all Chinese immigrant women; they should be seen as individuals instead of a group. Also, the idea of "Chinese traditional culture" is general and may not apply to all Chinese people.

The other limitation of the research may be language barriers and cultural barriers between participants and the researcher. Without interpreters, misunderstandings may arise. As an international student from Taiwan, I speak Mandarin, Hokkien, and English, and can speak to participants with no English at all. This may have been a benefit; however, there are differences in terms of political, social, and economic dimensions between mainland China and Taiwan. Understanding the content is indispensable in understanding participants' nuances and subtleties of speech.

The last limitation may be my status as an insider in the immigrant community. Participants said that if the researcher could not speak Mandarin, they would not participate in the interviews because they are unable to speak English fluently enough to express themselves. Also, they trusted me and so shared their stories with me. Knowing them before conducting interviews and building trusting relationships helped me gather information. Nonetheless, this could have blinded me, as I may have unconsciously had a potential agenda although I specifically tried to avoid bias. I did this by carefully on reflecting on the interviews and considering how my experiences might influence the analysis.

Additionally, participants were extremely afraid of rumours coming out within the Chinese immigrant community, even though confidentiality and anonymity are assured. Northern communities are small with a limited immigrant population. They worried that their marriage issues would be known by others and tended not to give much information. This was understandable, but inhibited data collection and the idea of discussing the topic possibly may have turned away potential participants.

Suggestions for Future Research

The issues of immigrants in remote settings are important due to the lack of studies and unique experiences. Further studies are very necessary. This exploratory study of Chinese immigrant women's experiences in remote settings is almost without precedence. Six themes are addressed from the study, and each theme is worthy of further development and examination. The issues and topics from themes can be deeply and broadly explored in future research.

Immigrant women from different ethnicities in remote settings may have distinct experiences and all their voices deserved to be heard. Immigrants from different countries have different difficulties and strengths in the adjustment process. It would be useful to explore and compare the experiences and similarities /differences between different ethnic groups of immigrant women. It would be beneficial not only for immigrant women to be aware of others' experiences, but also for policy makers and service makers to provide proper services based on their needs.

Finally, the male perspective should be explored. When it comes to topics, such as immigrant issues or mail order brides, the masculine point of view seems absent from the research. The man is not always the one who holds a more powerful position in the

international marriage. For instance, one of my neighbours in Taiwan married a mail order bride from Vietnam, and she is the one who controls the relationship, despite the fact that he is the only one who earns income. It is challenging to present a balanced view of the mail order bride phenomena from a single side; the man is often depicted as the offender and the bride as the victim. Future research may help the social work community understand it more clearly to provide appropriate services to all parties involved.

Summary

In this section, discussion of the findings, implications and recommendations based on the findings, and limitations of the research are presented. First of all, six themes and 19 sub-themes were derived from the data to address Chinese immigrant women's experience of living in remote communities of northern B.C.. Among these, language barriers and cultural barriers are most important in affecting the women's adjustment process. Parenting is also a concern and challenge. Moreover, in remote communities of northern B.C., unique conditions and severe weather can result in difficulties of adjustment. Nonetheless, Chinese immigrant women may have more job opportunities in remote settings even if these are labour jobs. Additionally, Chinese immigrant women's social support networks function in different ways. Their husbands, friends, and even organizations either in Mainland China or northern B.C. help them cope with challenges they face in the adjustment process.

Implications and recommendations drawn from the findings are: the importance of offering settlement services in multiple languages, programs and services promoted broadly, helping immigrant women build social networks through activities and cultural centres, and cultural competence in social work professionals.

As insider, I was surprised that some of the participants chose to remind the relationships that were unhappy and even oppressive. The issues of immigrants in remote settings are worthy of further examination and the male perspectives should be included.

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Appendix A: A Semi-structured Interview Guide

Demographics

1. Provinces of China:_____
2. First language (dialect):_____
3. What is your level of English: _____fundamental _____intermediate _____ Proficient
4. Your age and your husband's age:_____
5. How long have you been in Canada?_____
6. How many children have you had? (If you have children, how old are they?)_____
7. How many people live in your household?_____
8. Do you have a job now? (If yes, what is your job? / how about your career? Do you have career in Canada? What is your career here?)_____
9. What is your husband's job? _____
10. What language(s) do you speak at home?_____
11. Did you receive any training (such as language or culture classes) before coming to Canada?_____
12. What is your highest level of education? (Have you pursued further education after immigrating to Canada?)_____
13. What is your husband's highest education?_____
14. What transportation do you use? (ex. You own a car, you take a bus, or your family drive you around)_____
15. What is the financial standing of your household?_____Low_____Middle_____ High _____

Draft Questions

1. Before coming to Canada
   1) What is your career before you come to Canada?
   2) How do you like your life before you come to Canada?
   3) If you can tell me one thing or one story about yourself before you come to Canada, what would you like to tell me (and why)?
2. The adjustment process
   1) What made you decide to come overseas?

2) What are your first impressions about Canada?

3) Before coming to Canada what kind of ideas did you have about the country and society? Did these thoughts change once you arrived? Why?

4) Do you like life in Canada? Why or why not?

5) What are some differences between life in Canada and the country where you are from?

6) What was the most difficult time since you came to Canada? Why?

7) Could you tell me about the most difficult thing for you in the first year of your Canadian life?

3. The issues in remote communities of northern British Columbia

1) Do you experience different cultures since coming to Canada? (What are the different cultures or values between your original country and Canada? Would you please give me some examples?)

2) Have you ever faced discrimination, racism, and sexism in Canada? (If yes, could you please give some examples or why you feel that way?)

3) How do you feel or think about living in the north compared to a big city, such as Vancouver?

4) How do you feel making friends in your community? Where do you find most of your friends?

5) Do you feel lonely? (If yes, when do you feel lonely? Why do you feel lonely? if not, what helps you not feel lonely?)

6) Do you experience language barriers when talking to other people? (Why or why not?) Does it affect you in any way? Could you offer some examples?

7) How do you like the weather in the north?

8) How do you feel about your marriage? Why?

4. Social support networks

1) Who do you or would you like to talk to when facing a difficulty?

2) Who listens to your problems/concerns?

3) Is there anyone/agency to help you adjust to life in Canada by offering you emotional support, such as sharing their own life experience? (You may feel love, trust and caring by her or him).

4) Is there anyone/agency to help you in Canada by offering information, knowledge, and/ or advice that helps you understand the difficulties/issues and adjust to changes?

5) Is there anyone/agency to help you by offering material support, such as goods and services that assist to solve practical problems?

6) Do you interact with your husband's family? (Why or why not?) How often do you

talk to his family? Who do you contact? How do you contact them? How often do you talk to them? (This question is only for the women who married overseas and not for the women who reunite their family/ husbands in Canada.)

7) How do you feel about getting support from your husband or husband's family?

8) Do you contact your family in your original country (Why or why not?) Who do you contact to? How do you contact them? How often do you talk to them?

9) Do you feel you are supported by your family in your original country? (Why or why not?)

10) How does your husband feel about you contacting your original family?

11) Have you received any support from agencies, organizations or governments in/outside of where you live?

☐ No: what reasons cause you to not use it?

☐ Yes: what services have you used? How did you know this information was available? How did you feel about this service?

12) Please list the supports that you receive when you are in Canada.

13) What do you have right now in the way of resources/supports that you could not do without?

14) What recommendations would you like to make to other immigrant women marrying into Canadian families? Or preparing to reunite her family/husband in Canada?

5. Others

1) Have you heard the term of "mail-order-brides" before? (If yes, how do you feel about the term of "mail-order-brides"? Why?)/ How do you define mail-order-bride?

2) When you think of yourself as a Chinese immigrant women in Canada, is there anything you would like people to know?

3) As a Chinese immigrant woman, what is difference between you and other immigrant women?

4) Do you have anything you want to add or express?

Appendix B: Information Letter and Research Consent

IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES: ADJUSTMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

Dear Participant:

Thank-you for your interest in this research project and for your potential willingness to answer personal questions pertaining to you or your family. Most of you may know me as a settlement worker in schools (North Peace River area). However, this study will be conducted in my role as a Master of Social Work student at University of Northern British Columbia and it does not relate to my working, as well as School District No. 60 is not involved in the research.

The general purpose of this study is to better understand the needs of Chinese married immigrant women in remote settings. In this research, Chinese immigrant women will be these who were born in Mainland China, but have been sponsored by their partners or husbands who are Canadian Citizens or permanent residents under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. However, their partners or husbands are not necessarily Caucasians. The purpose of the study is to explore the adjustment process for Chinese immigrant women in remote communities of northern B.C. and how their social support networks work. Additionally, it further describes Chinese immigrant women's issues in remote communities. This comprises issues such as the difficulties Chinese immigrant women face, especially in remote settings; immigrant women's life adjustment processes; their strategies in adjusting to their new environment; and their social support networks.

The benefit is that, as a person who has lived the real experience in a remote northern community, you will be able to give your input, hopefully resulting in more of the needs of immigrant women, particularly Chinese immigrant women, being met in the future and better settlement services can be provided in remote communities. Additionally, I will provide the

information of available services either for women or immigrant women in the community. If you need extra support, please, do ask me and I would like to offer you useful resources in the community. If, at all, during the interview or following it, you are upset or anxious, I encourage you to contact the North Peace Resource Society at 250-785-6021 for women's Counseling services.

Your participation in this project will include an in-person interview about 90 minutes in length. The interview can take place in your home or, if you prefer, at another location chosen by you. If necessary, a second or third interview will be conducted in order to produce the most informative, efficient, and promising results for this study. However, it must be under your agreement. In order to protect your potential safety and privacy, interviews will take place with no other person in the room. The interview will be recorded by a digital voice recorder and transcribed by me. To ensure confidentiality, your identity will be kept anonymous and my supervisor, Glen Schmidt, and myself will be the only people with access to your identity, digital recordings, and transcriptions. The transcripts will be destroyed 2 years following completion of the project. Also, to ensure your comfort, you are able to stop an interview or to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. If you choose to do so, all your information will be withdrawn from the research as well.

A 10 dollar gift card to Tim Horton's will be provided to compensate for your participation. The digital data, interview notes, and transcripts will be securely stored and locked in filing cabinets at the researcher's office (the board office at School District No. 60).

In the event any questions arise, please do not hesitate to contact me at 1-778-964-0009 or hsiaoy@unbc.ca. The final report will be available after completion of the research (in approximately November of 2011). If at that time you would like a copy, please contact Yufen at

the cell phone number or email above. If you have any complaints about this project, please direct them to Glen Schmidt at 250-960-6519 or schmidt@unbc.ca. or the UNBC Office of Research at 250-960-6735 or reb@unbc.ca.

As part of this process, a copy of your consent form must be given to you. Whether or not you choose to participate in this interview, I would like to thank you for your time spent in reading over the above information.

With warm regards,

Yufen Hsiao

Appendix C: Research Consent Form

IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES: ADJUSTMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

Yes [ ] / No [ ]
I read the information letter given by Yufen Hsiao, and I understand the purpose of the research and what my participation will entail. I also agree with the information.

Yes [ ] / No [ ]
I have agreed to take part in a research project being conducted by Yufen Hsiao, an MSW student at University British Columbia and my permission is also given to Yufen Hsiao to use the information in the research report.

Yes [ ] / No [ ]
My participation in this project will include an in-person interview about 90 minutes in length. If necessary, a second or third interview will be conducted with my agreement.

Yes [ ] / No [ ]
I know the final report will be available after completion of the research (in approximately November of 2011) by contacting Yufen Hsiao at 1-778-964-0009 or hsiaoy@unbc.ca. She would like to provide a copy.

Yes [ ] / No [ ]
I know that in the event any questions arise, I can contact Yufen Hsiao at 1-778-964-0009 or hsiaoy@unbc.ca. If I have any complaints about this project, I can direct them to Glen Schmidt at 250-960-6519 or schmidt@unbc.ca. or the UNBC Office of Research at 250-960-6735 or reb@unbc.ca.

Yes [ ] / No [ ]
After interviews, I am willing to be contacted at a later date.

Signature of Participant	**Date signed**
Signature of Yufen Hsiao	**Date Signed**

Appendix D: Consent Form of Storing Data in the School Board Office

The employee, Yufen Hsiao, will use the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) office to store the data she collects from participants on a project research, IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES: ADJUSTMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS. The research project is being completed as part of the requirement for her Master of Social Work degree at the University of Northern British Columbia. Storing the data in the office will not cause any extra cost or damage for the School District No. 60 and will not affect her employment in any ways.

Signature of Student Support Service Principal (School District 60)	Date signed
Signature of Yufen Hsiao	Date Signed

Appendix E: Resources

Women's Outreach Program (North Peace Resource Society): This program provides practical support and assistance to women who have experienced, or who are at risk of abuse, threats or violence, and their dependent children.
- Phone: 250-785-6021
- e-mail: mcarleton@npcrs.bc.ca

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Northern BC Newcomers Integration Service Centre: it provides settlement and employment services to the immigrant community in the north.
- Phone: 250-785-5323
- Fax: 250-785-5687

Fort St. John Literacy Society
- Phone: (250) 785-2110
- Fax: (250) 785-2127
- E-mail: info@fsjliteracy.ca

Strengthening Families Program (North Peace Resource Society): This is a free 14 week multi-cultural family skills training program for parents and their children aged 6-12 years.
- Phone: 250-785-6021
- E-mail: khume@npcrs.bc.ca

Women's Counselling Program (North Peace Resource Society): This program provides counselling for women ages 19+ who have experienced any form of sexual assault, abuse in relationships, child abuse and/or childhood violence.
- Phone: 250- 785-6021
- E-mail: cclark@npcrs.bc.ca